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Disunity

or

Politics of the Day



Illustrated by George Standfast
London 1844

D'HORSAY;

OR,

'THE FOLLIES OF THE DAY.

BY

A MAN OF FASHION.

IN ONE VOLUME.

LONDON:

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P R E F A C E .

WHEN the task of jotting down these cursory glances of life, and the essence of the age in which we live, was commenced by the delineator of them, he believed that he should incur the displeasure and hostility of many. At the same time he felt the assurance that no one could entertain these affections towards the teller of truth, save those who had great cause to dread the disclosure of it. Fearlessly and carelessly, therefore, he has continued his labours ; and should the result of them prove to a single sceptic how fruitless it is to join the gaudy train of Folly, how painful to make pleasure the business of existence, then will they meet with a reward more than commensurate to the exertion.

D'HORSAY;

OR,

THE FOLLIES OF THE DAY.

CHAPTER I.

IN the vicinity of Curzon street, Mayfair, there was, and, for aught we know to the contrary, there may be, a house of strange and peculiar architecture. Its construction was such as to give an appearance of ample room, whereas, in truth, it was the veriest nut-shell of a place that can well be conceived. The wide door, which opened only in the middle, formed quite two-thirds of the front, and yet, to the casual observer, it would seem the portal of a mansion of imposing aspect. Never was there such a deceptive house! How it contrived to hug its neighbours so closely, and blend them, as it were, with its own bricks and mortar, is a mystery which we confess ourselves inadequate to solve. Sufficient to say, that if a house obtaining a character under false pretences is an indictable offence, this, of all others, should be selected for exemplary and condign punishment. The interior, too, had a corresponding effect; for although elegant and refined taste was displayed in all its garniture and profusion of luxurious trifles, yet the same crafty attempt to appear above its size was palpable everywhere. Large mirrors, multiplying their reflected surfaces, and some cunningly devised to be approached by marble steps, gave an expansive semblance to the rooms, and all in all, "to seem what it was not," was declared in every brick, nook, and corner of this false and subtle edifice.

The time was morning; that is, although the sun had been dipping a full hour from his altitude, it was still, in the world of

fashion, the beginning of the day, and the beginning of the day is generally understood to come under the denomination of that division of the hours' flight.

In the lower room of this house of counterfeit show, sat, or rather lounged, a leader of the votaries of pleasure. The Marquis D'Horsay was, indeed, "the glass of fashion, and the mould of form." From the colour and tie of the kerchief which adorned his neck, to the spurs ornamenting the heels of his patent boots, he was the original for countless copyists, particularly and collectively. Even the brow which the ducal coronet occasionally pressed, was proud to wear the hat imitated from the model, which every aspiring Tittlebat Titmouse of the age strove to copy in his gossamer. The hue and cut of his many faultless coats, the turn of his closely-fitting inexpressibles, the shade of his gloves, the knot of his scarf, were studied by the motley multitude with greater interest and avidity than objects more profitable and worthy of their regard, perchance, could possibly hope to obtain. Nor did the beard that flourished luxuriantly upon the delicate and nicely-chiselled features of the Marquis, escape the universal imitation. Those who could not cultivate their scanty crops into the desirable arrangement, had recourse to art and stratagem to supply the natural deficiency. Atkinson and Rowland revelled in the attempts. From the extreme east to the far west ends of London, lights and shadows of the Marquis were plentiful as daisies in merry May. Wristbands, both false and real, were turned over cuffs of every dye and texture, and, in short, from the most essential article of the modish lion's dress to the most trifling, not an item was left confined to its pristine state of originality. And this general monomania was not restricted only to "the fashion which adorned his person." The style of his equipage, the richly ornamented harness, the dainty stepping of his cavalier horse, the very boots of the tiger-cub in attendance in the rear, were all objects of envy and close imitation. Many a hired nag has had reason to sorrow for the high-stepping example. How often of a Sunday afternoon might divers couples of dashing stool jockies be seen in striped and picked-out dennet, tilbury, and "shay with a kiver, called a cab-ri-o-ly," taking up another hole in the bearing-rein, and establishing a tender spot, by the vulgar termed a raw, in order to obtain a little action. How frequently would a sly button be fixed to the end of the thong, that a stinging and silent

cut might be administered without attracting the notice of Sir Peter Laurie, or any other *employé* of the Society for Preventing Cruelty to Animals, now and for ever in sturdy opposition to the patent wood pavement companies. We repeat, how often have these things been noticed, and yet, until now, left unrecorded.

Enveloped in a loose morning wrapper, composed of rose-coloured silk, figured with white flowers, and with the tips of his toes balancing a couple of intricately-wrought slippers, the Marquis reclined in a superlatively easy chair. Within reach of his dexter hand was a table bearing an untasted breakfast. The chocolate was cold, the viands untouched. Was it thought, care, *ennui*, or what of the many causes that, acting dully on the brain, made the Marquis look insensible to external matters? His chin was buried in his breast, and his eyes bent abstractedly on a little pink cocked-hat note, still sealed, which he kept twirling between his fingers.

"No; I really must reform," soliloquised he, taking a small pocket-glass from the mantle, and surveying minutely the extreme corners of his eyes. "Already there are strong indications of the germs of wrinkles sown by the small hours; and yet what would life be without them, at least *my* life? Faugh! 'tis always thus. I ever feel saintly when worn and weary."

The truth was out. Lassitude from the previous night's excess drooped the energies of our hero. He felt like a lily severed from its root, or a plucked rose flagging in a July noon, or, in a more familiar simile of a celebrated conductor to an omnibus, he felt "*baked*." "Ah!" continued the Marquis, breaking the seal of the note, and glancing at its contents, he threw it carelessly from him, "it is so with all of them. Doubts, fears, sighs, and tears. What would life be without them—at least *my* life?" And at the conclusion of this self-interrogatory, he relapsed into his former listless state.

At this moment an assault was made upon the street door in the shape of a thundering rap-tapping which, for loudness and duration, was never surpassed in the neighbourhood of Mayfair. A stoic, an Indian from the Rocky Mountains of the Far West, or a candidate well qualified for the deaf asylum, might have listened unmoved; but one sensitive to sound could scarcely be anticipated so to act, and therefore a start and sudden exclamation of the monosyllable, "Oh!" on the part of the Marquis, was no very unnatural proceeding.

"Mr Pelham," announced the servant, flinging open the door of the apartment.

"Would to heaven, my dear fellow," observed the Marquis, extending two fingers for a shake, but without raising his head to look at his visitor, "would to heaven you would give directions to your creature to study one's nerves. Positively," continued he, "I'm disagreeably convinced, at this instant, of the possession of that which, only last night, I declared, upon the honour of a gentleman, I had parted with for ever."

"And what may that be?" inquired his friend, looking askance, in a well-adapted mirror, at a remarkably handsome profile, which he called "his own, and own only."

"My heart, Pelham, my heart," replied the Marquis, smiling blandly, and pressing the left fluttering side of his body.

"Come, that's very good," rejoined his companion, occupying a chair, and running his fingers through some dark-brown ringlets. "But I saw a fair one at the Opera last night," continued he, "who flattered herself, in years gone by, that she possessed it whole and entire."

"What, my——"

"Don't say the word," interrupted his friend. "I know of none in the English language so replete with vulgarity."

"*Cara sposa*, I was about observing," added the Marquis.

"Ah! that's an improvement, certainly," observed Mr Pelham. "You were aware of her presence?" continued he, interrogatively.

"Ye—es," replied the Marquis, with an air and tone that trod closely on the heels of a yawn. "By a tangent and reflected light, I was sensible that such must be the case."

"How so?"

"A well, but not perfectly concealed embarrassment on the part of my lady, informed me," returned the Marquis, lazily. "She pretended to sweep the circles twice or thrice with her glass," continued he; "but I saw that her eyes were fixed on the opposite side of the house, and from a slight quiver of the lip, I knew who must be there."

"The Marchioness had a companion," remarked Mr Pelham, tapping his well-appointed foot with his gold-mounted cane.

"Indeed!"

"What, you didn't observe the occupants, then?" said his companion.

"No ; I studiously avoided turning my eyes to that quarter," replied the Marquis. "An accidental circumstance of the kind has occasioned scenes behind the curtain, and I detest the trouble they entail."

"'Tis truly wise to be guided by precedent," returned his friend. "But I should have thought you could scarcely have failed seeing the author of that very personal production in which I conspicuously and unfairly move and have my being."

"Some, *some* few entertain a different opinion," rejoined the Marquis, laughing. "But no matter, Pelham," continued he. "Praise undeserved never ensures an extensive notoriety, while censure seldom fails to produce it, whether merited or not."

"An axiom for my next novel," added his companion, taking some ivory tablets from his pocket and making a memorandum of the self-evident demonstration. "Like all great men," continued he, "fame to me is the idol—the shrine for my concentrated devotions. I care not for any sublunary evils—not even a dun—so long as the trumpet-tongued divinity puffs me in accordance with my own ideas of well-earned distinction."

"You have named about the only exception I should have objected to," observed the Marquis, raising himself with considerable effort, and exhibiting a spirit in the tone of his voice which strongly smacked of sincerity. "A dun," continued he, "is a monster of awful shape ! His single knock in the early morn reverberates upon the discomposed nerves, and, in the words of one of you immortal poets, horridly shakes our dispositions with thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls. In a moment, memory—the lightning of the mind—recals the overdrawn account, the unreal, ghostly credit of men who quarter on the mass. Reflections upon a certain amusement, ye!e!pt kite-flying, crowd irresistibly in the medley of associations, and bring forth too frequently the impression that not another fictitious promise to pay could be added to the motley group, bearing one's autograph in many, alas ! too confiding martyrs' hands. By the way, this puts me in mind of a *bon mot* from Anderson yesterday. Alluding to the unprecedented number of aristocratic signatures in his possession, for hunters, hacks, and park horses, he declared as his religious belief, couched in very strong terms, that if the paper on which they were flourished was made into one entire kite, and he looped to its tail, no power could bring him to earth again, but that he should fly for ever."

"The magnitude of the instrument would doubtlessly contribute to its powers of floating interminably through infinity of space," replied Mr Pelham, smiling. "But to my purpose of calling upon you this morning. Will you favour me by sketching my portrait? It's to be engraved by Ryall; published and submitted to all the crowned heads in Europe, by that most facetious tuft-hunter and publisher, Mr Moon, of Threadbodkin street."

"Really, if such are to be the vehicles for bringing it before the public," rejoined the Marquis, "I shall not hesitate to grant your request; but to be conscious that a copy of a drawing of mine was to be seen as a peripatetic advertisement, unstamped and defrauding the revenue, dangling on a nail in one of those plebeian vehicles, called, I am given to understand, an omnibus, would positively render me reluctant to do so."

Just at this time a second vigorous assault was made upon the street door, and without ceremony,—for the newcomer gave no time for the servant to announce him in form,—a third was added to the party. He was a well-made man, possessing strongly-knit thews and sinews. His broad and ample chest was made the most of by a coat and waistcoat thrown back to the utmost of their capacities, and, although they caused an appearance of his having lately been exposed to some strong gusts of wind in his front, set off the proportions of his frame to some advantage. His hair was light, and his thickly-grown whiskers—much resembling those of the Marquis in shape—were of that doubtful hue called auburn by friendly tongues, and red by inimical. The costume was certainly of the order called singular; consisting of a sky-blue broad-skirted coat with large gilt buttons, a crimson velvet waistcoat, a violet satin scarf, sticking out like the inflated crop of a pigeon, and canary-coloured, tight-fitting trousers. There was an undeniable expression of good humour and self-satisfaction in his features, which, if not very prepossessing, were anything but the reverse; and, altogether, the Earl of Chesterlane, for it was he *in propria persona*, was a man not to be passed in a crowd without the observation of observers.

After salutations, and warm ones too, were exchanged, and some trifling but confidential matters discussed concerning some *affaires d'amour*, the Earl said, "About the finest diversion that can well be conceived is on the *tapis*."

"And what may that be, my dear Tom," inquired the

Marquis, sipping with some reluctance a minimum drop of chocolate.

"The Count's going to be sold a respectable bargain. A very nice lot indeed, and he shall have it," continued the Earl, "upon his own terms."

"Let us hear the particulars," observed Pelham.

"He has had a liquorish tooth for some time past for the Bolton-street belle," replied the Earl; "and she, cunning minx that she is, consented to listen to his tale of love, provided a very comfortable annuity was settled upon her. Ha, ha, ha! The poor deluded man agreed and begged of me, as the greatest boon I could possibly bestow, to become trustee in the matter."

"But of course you did not," observed the Marquis.

"As a matter of course I *did*," returned the Earl, "inasmuch as I was advised strenuously by a well-meaning fellow at my elbow, to have no interference whatever in the affair, and, as you know, I invariably do that which I'm told *not*, upon every occasion of my life."

"The innate law of contradiction must be one of the first in your nature," remarked Mr Pelham.

"I dare say it is," replied the Earl; "but I never troubled myself with the inquiry. However, to continue my story. There was one stipulation I bargained for. A bet of a cool thousand, p. p., that she made a clean bolt of it within a little month of the start. 'Gad, Sirs! the Count snapped at the offer, like a trout at a Mayfly. It was booked on the instant; and if he isn't cooked brown, say that I'm no judge of beauty."

"Wherefore do you draw that inference?" observed the Marquis.

"From a certain source of information which cannot admit of a doubt."

"Did the lady tell you that such was her intention?" inquired Pelham.

"Not exactly," replied the Earl. "But Nedstone is in the race, and it's more than two to one he bears away the plate *over a flat*."

"Good, very good," returned the Marquis, nodding his head in patronage of the wit; "but the time named is short for the event to come off."

"I would have made it half the time with trifling odds—one point would have been sufficient," added the Earl. "Poor in-

fatuated Catalany! I would be sorry for your unhappy, misplaced confidence, was there a pip of sympathy left for deceived humanity."

"Your stock, then, is exhausted," observed Pelham.

"Quite so; the last remnant went as balmy unction to the shelled pockets of Muffield, when Caravan was troubled with the slows at that Derby which will never be effaced from his memory or mine. 'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody good."

"By-the-by, Cerito appears to-morrow night, I see," observed the Marquis, glancing at the columns of the Morning Post, spread, after being well aired, upon the breakfast table.

"I don't think she will," replied the Earl; "for we intend teaching Laporte a lesson, after the opera, for not engaging Tamburini; and should he decline making a handsome apology for his culpable refusal to accede to the tenor's terms, and an arrangement to engage him immediately, there will be no Cerito."

"I hope she's pretty," remarked Pelham.

"If not, her doom's sealed," replied the Marquis.

"We'll not have her a second night, be she equal to Terpsichore."

"Laporte is aware of that," said the Earl, "and would not cater in opposition to our tastes: he knows full well how much depends upon the omnibus box."

"And so there's to be a row," remarked Pelham.

"A Tamburini riot, a regular shindy," replied the Earl, "after our dinner in Arlington street. Till when adieu, *au revoir*."

CHAPTER II.

MUCH has been said and written of and concerning "high life below stairs;" but few have correct notions of the extent to which this counterfeit imitation of the habits and etiquette of the "exclusives" is carried out among their obsequious grooms, flunkys, tigers, and cubs. At many public-houses in the environs of Piccadilly, and such like aristocratic neighbourhoods, clubs are held and conducted by committees and secretaries, and all forms observed with as much punctiliousness as in the more refined *locale* of the Carlton, the Athenæum, or the United Service. Here, on certain appointed evenings, congregate the bloated porter; the butler, with face painted and deeply dyed with his master's best and

choicest wines ; the dainty footman, powdered and perfumed, rejoicing in six feet one, with calves moulded in Nature's faultless form ; the slang-tongued groom, looking out of his top boots and over his white neckcloth, the very image of impudence personified ; coachmen, with double chins, and waistcoats having double the quantity of material to those of the general order of men ; mincing valets, who have travelled and seen the world with the same advantages of a certain monkey of old ; and the small fry following in their wake, too numerous and too unimportant to describe. Ready at the beck and call, obedient as spaniels in a leash, it is scarcely to be credited, in the trusting minds of masters and mistresses, that their household affairs, whispered conferences, confidential communications, diplomatic circumventions, and most secret arrangements are discussed in these societies with a freedom of speech and liberty of manner which might put the House of Commons to the blush in its most rollicking humour to make itself a bye-word of reproach. Here all hypocrisy of respect is abandoned. The truth is stripped of all disguise. They are no longer menials, but inquisitors and arbitrators. Many, ay, many a man has received a push on the slope of ruin, which, if traced to its proper source, would be discovered to be from the unseen hand and licensed tongue of his domestic.

At a well-known house, called 'The Coach and Horses,' a club of this description is held, and among the number of members there is a considerable sprinkling of touts, legs, and sporting characters of all kinds in a small line of business.

It was Saturday night, and the club-room, as usual, crowded to excess. The atmosphere was dense and foggy, arising from every pair of lips puffing forth an unintermitting volume of curling smoke from the dried and fragrant weed. A goodly array of bottles stood upon the table, flanked by the company, containing wines and liquors of many sorts and kinds, from the common distillation of Booth's cordial to the expensive Chateau Margeaux. Nor did it depend entirely on the tastes of the individuals present as to their selection of the refreshing fluids, but rather upon their temporary means ; for each had to pay for what he ordered, or share of the expenses of his mess. Those who were "in luck" evinced their condition by confidence of tone and carelessness of charges, while those whose exchequers rendered an account of beggarly purses exhibited a corresponding and seemly humility.

"Well, Lushy!" exclaimed a short, thick-set man, in the garb of a groom out of livery, to a companion opposite of a similar cast; "well, Lushy! how long will your swell cove carry on the war?"

"Two months, three weeks, and four days," was the reply.

"Come, that's keeping a very strict tally," rejoined the questioner. "What makes ye think that's the nick o'time for the smash?"

"Shallow, of Henrietta street, can stump him up on that day if he likes, and I'll be d—d if the power with him isn't shadow to the deed," returned the individual addressed as Lushy.

"That it is, and no mistake," added the first speaker. "I'd make hay while the sun shines if I were you."

"I've feathered my nest as well as I can," was the rejoinder. "I've been round to all the tradesmen that would tip for the information, and, putting on the screw off-hand, some of 'em's got their rowdy."

"How thankful and grateful they ought to be," added the inquirer. "Sink my blessed hopes! but *they* ought to think of us when they're whistling hymns. I gave our state pig warning yesterday," continued he, sending a volume of smoke from his mouth, and watching its fantastic shapes curling upwards.

"What was the split about?" asked Lushy.

"He ordered the 'osses by three o'clock the day before, and because I chanced not to be round quite by five, raised his hackles, and came the grumble."

"What can ye expect but a grunt from a hog!" observed Lushy; "there's no other tune, I believe, to be had from a porker."

"Talking of beasts," replied his companion, "puts me in mind of your late employer. Do you know what's become of him?"

"Plucked, stumped, and mizzled," replied Lushy; "and," continued he, after swallowing the major part of a large glass of brandy and water, "it sarved him right."

Cards, dice, backgammon-boards, and betting were now introduced. Money in various sums, wine, glasses of cold without, hot with, goes of gins, quarterns and half quarterns, and every kind of quality, quantity, and description of stimulating fluids, were the stakes to be played for. The conversation was upon the general topics of the day; but racing, hunting, and the ring formed the leading subjects of interest.

At the end of the room, farthest from the door, a man was sitting of that genus properly described "doubtful." It was next to impossible to form an opinion, from his outward bearing, of what he was or what he had been. He might be a faded horse-dealer, a stage-coachman out of place, a tout at his wits' end for lies or villany, a broken-down blackleg, a withered bonnet from a closed gambling-house, an uncertificated bankrupt in the thimble-rig line, or any one of these questionable occupations, abandoned, long since, by the fickle goddess and her favours. He was a tall, lank figure, with features more striking for their peculiarly unprepossessing expression than any other quality. The countenance of which he was the proprietor could not be justly accused of being more offensively ugly than many of its fellows then present; but there was such a monkey-in-a-vicious-mood-like, starved-rat look about his closely-set, twinkling grey eyes and lipless mouth, that caused involuntary reluctance to hold close communion with him, and an impulse to button ones breeches' pockets when chance decreed a near proximity. The hair, which reared itself in short thick bristles upon his head, round behind, and flat as a fritter before, was of a dusty brown, and seemed to have been cropped with no other intent than to leave as little as possible without applying the annihilating edge of a razor. His nose was a bold turn up; not an undecided, equivocal organ; but a positive, bridgeless snout. White, large, and even as a dog-shark's, his teeth were well constructed for the office of chief of the cannibals; and although he was never accused of devouring a member of the human family, he was frequently heard to declare that "he should like to chaw a young swell as fine as powder, and he only wanted the opportunity to catch a flat to skin him clean."

A coat, that had been fashionable in days gone by, and looked upon as one of Cooke's most successful and artistical attempts, was buttoned closely to the throat; luckily for the wearer, it would bear this unnatural strain, otherwise it must have exposed the want of garment commonly worn next the skin, and composed of linen. Good fortune and misfortune, however, are closely linked, and was illustrated even in this old coat. That which screened one want exposed another. The sloping, cutaway, Newmarket-bang breast gave to view the deficiency of a waistcoat. Alas! that article of dress had been trusted to the too safe keeping of a popular uncle, who advanced the

"wherewithal" to defray the expenses of a breakfast consumed that morning, before the cock crew, at the corner of a street. A pair of decayed black trousers hung, like leaves in autumn, upon his limbs, and his feet were in a constant state of labour to keep in unity with some soleless skeletons of shoes.

It may, perchance, be a matter of astonishment to the uninitiated, that one so very far run to seed should be qualified to take his seat among those who seemed themselves above the title of simple gentlemen; for, like the schoolmaster who prided himself, not upon being a scholar, but the being a *master* of scholars, so these aspirants founded their claim to superior quality upon being gentlemen's *gentlemen*. To an experienced clubbist, however, it will occasion no surprise, as he well knows that, once admitted, there is no power to give notice to quit. In, and he is a fixture; a limb of the society which it has no power to self-amputate. Now this was the case with the individual in question. Mr Thomas Bosk—or, in the familiar language of his equals, Bosky Tom—when head-groom to Lord Muffield, in the prime and summer of his days, and long before the Quorn hounds had to feed on chicken broth, and the stud on jelly, by reason of the extended liberality of the poulterer and pastrycook—had been elected without one black ball from inimical fingers. He was then a roaring, swaggering blade, with plenty of friends, a little money, and large stock of impudence. Happy Bosky! Alack, "where be your gibes now, your songs, your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning! quite chap-fallen!"

Luxuriating in long-drawn pulls from a friendly pipe, silent, disregarded, and forgotten, Bosky Tom mingled deep-fetched sighs from a heavy heart with the fumes of the narcotic plant, and thought of days and things long since passed away. From the past to the present—such are the quick bounds of that noble faculty the mind—he began to speculate on the means of bettering his present condition. To beg, borrow, or to steal appeared to be the only roads for the desirable end. The two former had been trodden too frequently for further advantage to be derived from the same path, and the latter—but more of that anon.

Trouble and thirst are often coupled together. Bosky Tom looked wistfully at his neighbours' well-charged goblets, shuffled his feet, coughed, and did all that he possibly could to obtain an

invitation for the share of a friendly cup; but he had so frequently abused the offer by draining instead of sipping, that no one proffered him even a moistening drop. Besides, there was an unequivocal inclination to give him the cold shoulder for various reasons, and the most conclusive one was, that Bosky Tom's star was still in anything but the ascendant. He was a down pin, a gone kitten!

Necessity, dictator of the best, the noblest attributes! thou cunning artificer of the soldier's crown and poet's wreath—what would this speck in the whole be without thee? Support to the weak and faint-hearted; spur to the laggard;—

“How vainly would the wise

Inquire, define, distinguish, teach, devise,

Didst thou not stand to point their dull philosophies.”

Bosky Tom slapped his dexter thigh; a smile flickered across his despairing features like a flash of light through the misty veil of morn. “I have it, by ——,” and Bosky Tom forgot a certain commandment.

“I can let a gentleman have a wrinkle worth the money,” said he, “if there's one of a mind to stand ‘ansum.’”

“Is it a cross?” inquired a patron of pugilism.

“Or a case of hocus?” inquired a subscriber to Tattersall's.

Bosky Tom looked very knowing out of the corners of his eyes at each of the inquirers, but made no reply.

The effect was not lost upon them, and, rising from his chair, the turfite beckoned Tom into a corner of the room.

“Is it anything in my line?” asked he.

“That it is,” replied Tom, confidently; “there ain't a cove present more likely to benefit by the information I can give ye.”

“What's your terms?”

“Put a sovereign into my fist,” rejoined Tom, “and the bargain's struck.”

“But what if the wrinkle's an old 'un to me?”

“I know it isn't,” returned Tom; “don't fear that, but fork out the rowdy.”

With some little hesitation the piece of glittering gold was placed in the palm of Bosky Tom's extended hand, and the donor bent his ear for the expected intelligence.

Twice Bosky Tom essayed to speak; but the stifled laugh in his throat stopped the utterance of the words.

"Why don't you go on?" growled his impatient auditor.

"Well, then! listen," returned Tom, and putting his mouth close to his companion's head, whispered, "if you ever get a month at the mill, take the side *next the wall*; I've just come off, and found the comfort of it."

An oath, deep and profane, burst from the tongue of the individual so neatly "sold;" but observing that Bosky Tom had put himself on the defensive, with a face expressive of determination to abide the issue at any cost, he wisely resolved to put up stoically with his first loss, which most unquestionably was the least, as, literally and figuratively, Bosky Tom was a very ugly customer.

From causes minute as imperceptible atoms great events arise. We shall see what this profile of her Majesty in gold produces for Bosky Tom.

CHAPTER III.

THERE are some persons and things that will not bear a graphic description. To delineate them is to offer a negative affront to our gentle readers, by way of anticipating their want of knowledge in matters which, if confessed, would argue themselves unknown. To our country cousins, a circumstantial report of the *bon mots* flowing daily from the lips of the facetious civic functionaries, setting the halls of justice in echoing roars, while sporting with the liberties of the subject, might doubtlessly prove truly interesting; but to those who had *once* heard them, a repetition must be an exceedingly flat and dozy proceeding. To them, also, the particulars of the last debate in the House of Lords—more especially if Lord Brougham was enacting the part of a celebrated *nigger*, bearing the patronymic of "Crow,"—might be acceptable; but Heaven forbid that a second infliction should be ever perpetrated. Now, as these pages are not designed for country cousins, or any such primitive individuals, we shall not run the risk of vexing the brains of those for whom they *are* intended, by painting to their imaginations the colour of the devil, or any such fact of notoriety which is so well understood. Besides, we might be discovered tripping in a fog. Abrupt and sudden, then, be our spring.

Shallow, everybody knows who knows anything of the world and its system—of bills, is a discounteer of the first water. And here let us pause at the outset to remark on the singularity of a great exception in a great custom.

Men are apt to dilate upon the respective excellences of their tailors, hatters, hosiers, bootmakers, coachmakers, and other of their *employés*; but one never, by any chance, hears of the virtues of “*my bill discounteer*,” or “*my pawnbroker* ;” and yet both are often floating in the minds of those who seem most ignorant of the secrets of such callings. The ruling passion frequently overcomes the resolution. We are surprised that this prevailing thought does not occasionally stumble on the revealer of its privacy ; but in the most babbling-tongued such reflections are never given to the gaping ear of curiosity.

Samuel Shallow—Heaven is witness, or, with more consistency perhaps, that brimstone vale, compared to which the Sahara of Africa is cool and refreshing, —how incongruous the name of his forefathers was !—was sitting in his private office contemplating his deeds and his misdeeds,—the former fairly engrossed and snugly ensconced in a pile of tin cases adorning the walls and floor of the room ; the latter faintly daguerreotyped in his memory—with more than usual complacency. Perhaps he had just been “robbing somebody, and receiving the bill !”

Inimitable Boz ! why search Bevis Marks for Samuel Brass, when here was one cut and dried, and far more deserving of thy caustic quill ? Rich, greasy knaves form a more fitting quarry for the falcon’s stoop, than those in tattered weeds with greedy stomachs.

If it had been the “iron tongue of midnight,” instead of the dustman’s ringing shrilly in the blabbing noontide hour, myriads of sparks would have been seen to fly from the bruised and clattering flints as a dashing carriage stopped suddenly at the entrance of Mr Shallow’s office. The horses were noble animals ; their harness tricked with shining plate, and all appeared gay and showy as a butterfly.

“Colonel Hopeland and Madge Redmond,” observed Mr Shallow, peering between the Venetian blinds as the occupants of the carriage descended with the assistance of a square-armed footman. “A pretty pair !” continued he, with a sneer. “One a broken down leg and bill prig ; the other—ha, ha, ha !—there’s a combination of originality ! a she hell-keeper, money-lender,

and—but that's in keeping with her sex. I'll not fling a stone at *that* establishment."

"My dear Shallow, how d'ye do?" asked the gentleman mentioned as Colonel Hopeland—a particularly well-dressed and fashionably-decked person—entering the apartment, bearing on his arm the remains of a rather fine and showy woman, much, very much overdressed. "Here we are, my dear Shallow," continued the Colonel, "in the fullest plume and feather. In the very best of humours with mankind in general, and ourselves in particular."

Greetings were given and received, and after a little bye-play, in the form of unmeaning questions and reply, concerning nothing and nobody, points of business became concentrated into a focus like the widely-spread rays of light through a telescope.

"I've a few shavings here—clean and unendorsed kites"—remarked Colonel Hopeland, producing a handful of blank acceptances, "which I want melted in the readiest form—I mean the quickest."

"Who is the accepter?" inquired Shallow, languidly, as if the matter was one of total indifference to him.

"A very green bud," replied the lady. "I can't really help expressing a regret, Colonel, that one so *very* Lincoln should not have been left to my tender nursing exclusively. I would have made——"

"An excellent *dry* nurse in the end, without doubt," interrupted Mr Shallow. And then there was such a roar that echoed in many a hollow turnip and heartless cabbage in the market hard by.

"The truth is," resumed the Colonel, blandly, "that Madge here has a little touch upon my commission for a few inconvenient thousands, and I wish to redeem the metal for the——" and here he shook the roll of stamps waggishly—"the dross."

"Humph! the badly-scratched autograph of Lord Hunting-castle, I see," remarked Mr Shallow; and then, partly closing his eyes as if to try the effect of seeing the Colonel in the perspective, continued, in a most insinuating tone, "May I ask for what purpose these were entrusted to your fostering care?"

A blush! no, not a blush; but a small quantity of blood was suddenly pumped into the face of the Colonel, as he replied with a stammer, "The object was to—to—to, of course, to get them discounted."

"And the proceeds?"

"Oh, damn the proceeds! what have you to do with the proceeds?" said the Colonel, irritably.

"Ah! exclaimed Mr Shallow, fast closing his eyes, and shaking his head virtuously and seriously, "I see how the matter stands. You'll ruin this young man, Hopeland, upon my soul you will."

"You're more likely to wind him up than myself," replied the Colonel. "I object to picking. There's a vast distinction between picking and plucking. One refers to the bones—the skeleton; the other to the simple feathers."

"When the feathers are gone," rejoined Mr Shallow, "I think it charity to pay attention to the bones. The sooner the climax is arrived at the better in that case."

"Come, come, gentlemen," said the lady, "we've had enough of this child's play. Now to business."

"With all my heart," returned the Colonel, cheerfully. "What will you give me, then, for these bills?"

"How much are they for?" inquired the discounteer.

"The batch is for a pleasant eight thousand," replied the Colonel.

"He has nothing in hand," observed Mr Shallow, looking at the ceiling immediately above him, and diving his hands deeply into his trousers pockets, as if calculating the chances of the reaping time.

"A splendid crop of expectations," returned the Colonel. "Nothing in the world can be finer," continued he. "Entailed estates to the tune of forty thousand a year. Think of that, master Shallow!"

"A pretty property, certainly," added the money-lender. "But his paternal ruler's life is a remarkably good one. In fact it's *too* good to speculate on."

"Life's uncertain in the most hale," remarked Mrs Redmond, with a pious and serene countenance. "We're here to-day; to-morrow we've cut our lucky."

"Yes, yes," replied Mr Shallow, "that's true, very true. There are accidents that occasion a premature removal from this sublunary planet, and exceedingly sudden too; but they seldom fall to the lot of those whose transition from this mortal coil confers considerable benefit upon their heirs and representatives. My

long experience has taught me this, and I therefore infer the devil has the management of dislocating necks, and other fatal adventures of the kind ; for being the author of all evil, his hands are so very full that he hasn't a moment to spare to compile even a shaving of good."

"Not unlikely," replied the Colonel. "But to the point. What do you say for the eight thousand?"

"The dates?"

"Any time you please. Long or short," continued the accommodating Colonel. "It's all the same to me."

"Fill them up, then, for one, two, and three months," returned Mr Shallow, "and I'll give three an' fourpence in the pound for the lump."

"Come, come," expostulated the Colonel, "you are a Christian, I suppose. Damn me, but one would think you were a Jew."

"Jews are the best-abused men in the world," replied Mr Shallow. "But Jew or Christian, I shall give no more."

"Why Mrs Redmond will advance on that, although she is in pretty deep in the same kind of stiff," added the Colonel, appealing to the lady.

"I certainly would," returned she ; "but really at this moment I've a small fortune invested in stamps alone, and money is worse than scarce with me."

"There's a great dearth of that article in the market just now," said Mr Shallow, "which renders it more valuable."

"Dearth, sir ! there never was anything to equal it," returned Mrs Redmond, with an unequivocal sincerity of feeling. "My house in St James's place is crowded nightly with nobs of the first quality ; but scarcely a farthing is staked, except my own money from the bills I discount, I O U's, and cheques on banks with no assets."

"A profitless concern," remarked Mr Shallow.

"So much so, that if two or three of my own partieuclar friends, Lord Bitchfield, the Marquis D'Horsay, and a few others, did not persuade me to keep the house on," replied the lady, "I should close the door."

"But if money is scarce," added the Colonel, "it isn't *extinct* ; one might reasonably conjecture, from Shallow's offer, that coin was becoming so, or, like the bustard in this country, exceedingly rare, and to be found only in wild, unfrequented spots."

After much haggling and discussion, it was agreed that Shallow

should have the bills at the liberal discount of a hundred and twenty per cent., and after receiving a draft for the amount, the Colonel and his companion departed; the former promising to return in a few days with another bundle of Lord Huntingcastle's autographs.

If a reflection crossed the mind of Shallow as the carriage rolled from his door, it was concerning a legal problem not yet satisfactorily solved—"Which of the two is the greatest rogue, the thief or the receiver?"

Scarcely had his visitors departed, when—*mirabile dictu*—who should be ushered into the room but Bosky Tom, in his own proper person; but as different a Tom in his rig and gear as between a moth in its chrysalis and gay-winged condition. No longer a grub, Bosky Tom looked one of the most marvellous metamorphoses—not excepting any of Ovid's—that language can express. He was decked in clothes of many colours, cut in the very pink of fashion. A profusion of jewellery glittered in his ruffled bosom, on his fingers, and across his flaunting waistcoat. In his hand he carried a gold-mounted cane; and if all was not quite pure and real, it possessed the advantage of looking quite as well. His hat—for he did not uncover as he entered—was stuck very much on one side, and, as he approached Mr Shallow, with extended digits and a rolling swagger, he had a far more independent air than many a gentleman with ten thousand a year.

We abhor mystery, however, and therefore, previous to entering on Bosky Tom's object in his visit to Mr Shallow, we shall explain the ways and means of his rise on the slippery pole of life that—unlike the one in country frolics—holds but the *phantom* of a leg of mutton and turnips for the successful climber when the top is gained.

With the sovereign—as honestly earned as any throughout his life, for truth, pure and unadulterated, was the chaste vehicle—Bosky Tom wended his way on the following morning to one of those disinterested individuals who would fain have the public believe they dispose of sovereigns for sixpences. He was standing in that outlawed and outcast of spots called Leicester square, asserting most emphatically "that for a wager he had to dispose of two hundred sovereigns within one hour at five shillings per dozen, and then was the time for people to come forward and make so eligible an investment."

Bosky Tom purchased a crown's worth of the counterfeit coin, and laying out about the same amount in procuring two thimbles, a small deal table, and a bit of cobbler's wax, betook himself to Epsom Downs on the day preceding the races.

It was a happy thought, and fortune smiled on the maiden attempt of Tom's public career as a thimble-rigger. The brass representations of sovereigns acted well as decoys to the real and substantial; and although the novice might not have been very expert in shuffling the thimble, and felt the want of a few associates in the garb of honest yeomen to render the establishment complete, he found himself, at the end of his day's toil, a much richer if not a better man.

At Ascot, in the same season,—for some eight months had sunk on the shores of time since Bosky Tom was introduced to our readers,—he was seen revelling in the luxury of a clean shirt, and surrounded by a host of assisting parasites, easing the pockets of many a lad and lassie who put too much credence in the old proverb of “seeing is believing.”

His tide of success rolled onwards. At Doncaster the plebeian occupation of the thimble-rig was abandoned, and Bosky Tom had now become a shareholder in a large gambling-booth with a small bank. After this profitable meeting, he, with his new partners, opened a silver hell for *rouge et noir* and *roulette*, in Pickering place, St James's. In a few weeks the firm were in a position to stand a pull, and gold began to chink upon the colours.

On, on, Bosky Tom! the rocket of thy fate is blazing upwards.

From the sneaking rat-hole in Pickering place a move was made to a magnificent house in Regent street. Mirrors, pictures, clocks, silk hangings, carpets, and furniture of the most costly description adorned the interior, while the exterior was made as conspicuous as possible, to denote the description of the establishment. No bolted and barred wicket defied lynx-eyed myrmidons of the law to enter and stay that which the law proscribed. A plate-glass door, unlatched and swinging freely on its hinges, was the only barrier to the entrance, and yet there was no interruption to the dupers or the duped.

Well may Justice wear the bandage across her eyes! The bribed jade is ever ready for a game of “blind man's buff,” and it depends upon the fee whether she *peeps* or not.

Right merrily THE STRANGER'S opened its glittering portal on each succeeding night; and, such were the attractions offered, that it drained the most fashionable playmen from Crockford's and the other aristocratic clubs in its immediate vicinity.

The tables were crowded, the stakes heavy, the profits large. In a little month after the opening, Bosky Tom and his partners might be seen mingling in the crowds of fashion in Hyde park, mounted on the finest horses, and assuming the airs of those whose follies and vices enabled them thus to live and fatten on. From step to step, not creeping and uncertain, but quickly and boldly, Bosky Tom progressed. He became a subscriber and constant frequenter at Tattersall's; paid well for information from the touts; betted heavily and freely; elbowed dukes, marquises, and earls, and began to have a contempt for baronets.

This was his present position; but the immediate cause of his visit upon Mr Shallow must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

"WE'VE a little too much stiff on hand," observed Bosky Tom, taking a leather case from one of his pockets, and producing a quantity of bills and promissory notes; "just glance your eye over them," continued he, placing the roll into Mr Shallow's hands, "and pick out those you can do for us."

"On my life," replied Mr Shallow, examining the stamps, "I cannot assist ye this morning."

"There's a capital assortment," rejoined Tom; "Chesterlane's, Muffield's, Bitchfield's, D'Horsay's, Paulding's——"

"Paulding's, is there?" interrupted Mr Shallow. "What a facetious fellow that is! Did you hear what he said to his step-father, the ex-chancellor, the other day?"

"No," replied his client.

"His lordship was lecturing him on his little innocent extravagancies, and remarked that he was sorry to hear not a man in London was so wild. 'Better be the wildest man on town, my lord,' replied Paulding, 'than the ugliest.' Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr Shallow. "It was very good; at the same time his kites were not worth their paper from that moment. I wouldn't," continued he, throwing a bill from him, "give the value of the ink it's filled up with for a thousand of them."

"What, the old gentleman won't forget the wipe at his mug?" said Bosky Tom.

"Never."

"Well!" returned Tom, "we shan't lose anything by him; and if he goes to the wall, he'll go like a brick."

"I can let you have five hundred on account," said Mr Shallow, after looking at the securities; "and in a week you shall have the balance."

"At the same rate, I suppose?" returned Bosky Tom.

"A shilling in the pound per month," replied Mr Shallow.

"In other words, sixty per cent.," added his client.

"And not too much, considering your profits and our risk," said Mr Shallow.

It should be here observed, that Mr Shallow's united occupations were attorney-at-law and solicitor in the High Court of Chancery, money-lender, and turfite. Taking these professions respectively, they are not proverbial for delicate probity; but when all were concentrated into one focus, the probability of knavish springs to work the machinery was reduced to something akin to a certainty.

Mr Shallow was a deep-minded man, and very frequently, when apparently absorbed in one employment, another, uppermost, was in a state of incubation. This was the case when filling up a cheque for the exclusive purposes and benefit of Bosky Tom and Co. He saw before him a thriving blackguard, one who knew no bounds or stop, and a fit assistant to weave some of the meshes in his widely-spreading net.

"I want you to make a few bets for me on commission," observed Mr Shallow, handing Tom the draft.

"With much pleasure," replied his client, taking a capacious betting-book from his pocket, and preparing to enter the order.

"My horse Pickpocket's favourably handicapped," remarked Mr Shallow, with a smile.

"He's beautifully in," returned Tom, "and stands a famous chance for the plate."

"Does he?" inquired the sporting lawyer with a peculiar sneer.

"Yes; and I suppose you think so," returned Tom, "or you wouldn't have backed him yesterday so heavily at the Corner."

"Besides," continued he, "his trial with Flytrap was no secret."

"I didn't intend it should be," rejoined the lawyer, smiling more and more.

A new light seemed to burst suddenly into Bosky Tom's *caput* like a ray of light through the chink of a closed shutter. "By —," and again he set at nought a certain commandment, "it was only a puff, then, to make him rise!"

The lawyer nodded.

"Listen!" returned he. "Pickpocket's a good horse, a very good horse indeed; but, in my opinion, the field's a better one. He wouldn't win if we were to run him on the square, and——"

"And so you mean to make a certainty of it," interrupted Bosky Tom, rubbing his hands with glee, and evincing entire satisfaction at the arrangement.

"Precisely so," added Mr Shallow. "I backed him yesterday in small sums, and shall continue to do so *to keep him up*, while I am sticking it against him *by commission* as heavy as I can get it on."

"It beats a cross at a mill!" exclaimed Bosky Tom, in an ecstasy of enthusiasm; "it beats a cross at a mill all to shavings! It's as good as coining, and twice as safe."

"You must lay it on as thick as you can," suggested Mr Shallow, "and your commission will be five-an'-twenty per cent."

"Come, come," expostulated Tom, "let's have half the swag. Every pound I get on, remember, is a clear pull."

"What a swallow-all you are to be sure," returned the lawyer irritably; "upon my life, a fair and generous allowance seems——"

"Well, well!" returned his client, "we'll not quarrel about terms. As you say, so let it be. But how is Pickpocket to be grilled? Is he to be drawn at the post, hocussed, or a pail of water given to him just before the pigskin's slapped across him?"

"He'll go a little visibly screwy on the morning of the race," replied Mr Shallow; "the trainer will manage that, and then draw him."

"And a very nice, sociable plan it is," rejoined Tom. "Bless'd if I don't think this is the march of intellect for raising the wind!" continued he.

"And it will go hard if we don't raise a little gust out of this," said the lawyer. "No one but a fool would run a horse to win when he can make it a certainty to gain by losing."

"Very true," added Bosky Tom; "an owner of a 'oss should always back himself out like a leary player at hazard, if he means business. Cuss me though if it isn't a heavenly arrangement that we're not all of the same way o' thinking. What a starving system it would be if rogue had to eat rogue."

Mr Shallow coughed and appeared a little uneasy at Bosky Tom's plain manner of delivering his sentiments, and probably having had quite enough of that gentleman's society, he rose from his seat, and looked hurriedly at his watch.

The hint was not lost on his client, who, after assuring his employer that he would catch every flat that would nibble, took his departure.

"His Royal Highness the Princee of Kamschatka," announced a wheezy-looking clerk, with solemn reverence, awe, and dignity blended, as a stout—not to say fat—pasty-featured, and moustached individual entered the room.

"Pardon my rascal for miscalling your Royal Highness," said Mr Shallow, advancing and bowing the new-comer to a seat.

"Name not dat, my ver dear sare," replied the Princee, with a graceful and condescending bow. "I have come vunce again to soleecit a leetel more of de monies. In dis charming country my rank, my wife, my everyting cost so ver much that I nevere get rid of vun single knock at de door but another comes tap."

"It's very disagreeable," remarked Mr Shallow, "and I am truly sorry for your position, sir; but I cannot assist you to-day, or indeed further until the bills I hold are paid."

"Tut, tut," returned the Princee, putting forth both his delicately-gloved fingers in an attitude of remonstrance; "when I get my kingdom——"

"Then I will discount your Royal Highness's bills," added Mr Shallow.

"I sall not want de deescounts then," said the Princee; "'tis now I require de deescounts; now dat I am so disagreeably short of de needful."

"I can only repeat my regret of not being able to assist your Royal Highness," replied the lawyer. "My losses have been so great lately," continued he, "that I require assistance myself."

There's my neighbour, the great John Wrong, the banker, who everybody considered to be *right*, went to the dogs last Monday, and kicked down a nice little lump of money of mine. Confound his speculations in steam, Greek loans, and dinner parties!"

"But, my ver dear friend," replied the Prince, supplicatingly, "I can assure you, on de honour of my royal blood—I will give you my honour——"

"As a security?" interrupted Mr Shallow.

"Ye—es," rejoined the Prince, bowing and placing his dexter hand on the left of his royal and capacious breast; "as the ver best security dat I can offer."

"It isn't a marketable one," returned the lawyer; "I couldn't raise a farthing on even the honour of a prince. No, no, no, sir, you must excuse my advancing more, and place my refusal to your request on account of my inability."

"But, my ver de—ar friend," persisted the Prince, "I can give you informations which will satisfy you dat I sall pay you all in good time."

"When the bills become due?" asked Mr Shallow.

"Ye—es," replied his Royal Highness confidently.

"That would alter matters," said the money-lender; "I might in that case manage to assist you."

"Ver well, then, listen to me," rejoined the Prince. "My sister-in-law—a most charming lady, not so beautiful as my Princess, and" (here his Royal Highness elongated his features considerably) "not quite so dispose to make long bills at de milliner's, is going to be married to English nobleman."

"A very different bird to a foreign prince," muttered the attorney.

"And," continued his Royal Highness, "a ver rich [earl indeed."

"His title?"

"The Earl of Byworden," replied the Prince; "and when de ceremony take place, I will draw on him, and draw, and draw——"

"Until the draw be closed or empty," said the facetious Mr Shallow.

"Ye—es," returned the Prince seriously, "until he vill not let me borrow no more; so you see, my ver dear friend, dat you vill get paid as I say, at de time promised."

"Is the day fixed for the event to come off?" inquired Mr Shallow, in sporting phraseology.

"Ye—es," replied his Royal Highness; "in vun week from dis time her ver common patro-neemic vill be changed to de Countess of Byworden."

"Humph!" ejaculated Mr Shallow. "How much money do you want, sir?"

"Vun thousand pounds," replied the Prince.

Without further parley, Mr Shallow opened his desk, and taking a stamp from a bundle, which he always kept on hand, dipped his pen in a neighbouring inkstand, and briefly inquired, "The date?"

"Two munts," replied his Royal Highness. "I sall be able to pay in two munts. It would not be delicate to draw before dat time."

"You'll not consider a couple of hundred too much as a bonus?" remarked the lawyer, filling up the stamp.

"It appears a great deal," replied the Prince, shrugging his shoulders; "but as you say, so must it be."

The note was signed, and a cheque given to the Prince for the amount named, who, after minutely regarding Mr Shallow's autograph with evident complacency, wafted an adieu by kissing the tips of his fingers, and took his departure.

"*A Prince!*" sneered Mr Shallow, "the penniless sponge."

"Ha! here we are, my man of money!" exclaimed a voice as the lawyer was closing the door on the heels of his visitor, and, upon widening it again, he perceived on the threshold the Earl of Chesterlane and the Marquis D'Horsay.

"We've come," continued the Earl, "for the balance of that joint acceptance, a bunch of seven pleasant hundreds. Let the notes be clean, thou close-shaved Shylock. How is Pickpocket?"

"In first-rate condition, my lord," replied Mr Shallow, placing seats for his clients, and bringing from a nook in a cunningly-devised and secret drawer a roll of bank notes.

"Is he to take the plate?" inquired the Marquis, with an air of *nonchalance*, and regarding the lawyer counting the money as if the task was a preliminary one of exciting desire to touch, something resembling the bobbing a cherry to the lips of some expectant urchin.

"He would be unworthy of his name did he not take the plate," replied Mr Shallow, with a smirk of satisfaction.

"'Gad, I've backed him through thick and thin," said the Earl. "Not ten minutes since I met that d—d rascal, and at the same time exceedingly original snob, Bosky Tom, and laid out fifty ponies at three to five on Pickpocket. We must pull through, Shallow, or the extent to which the manufacture of kites will proceed is quite terrible to contemplate."

Mr Shallow felt such an inclination to laugh—not in his sleeve—but a broad and fair haw-haw, that he was compelled to bury his face in his handkerchief, and feign a cough of the most choking symptoms. There was something so very cheerful to his peculiar frame of mind and inclination in finding his new decoy had lured a victim so readily and securely. Added to which, the knowledge he entertained of the Earl's exhausted finances, and the fresh stresses the certain loss about to be entailed upon him must occasion, brought pleasant visions of mortgages, bills of sale, and all the attending results of "sewing up" at the end.

"Pull through, my lord!" repeated Mr Shallow, giving a knowing toss with his head. "He can beat his own shadow, and distance the fleetest wind that ever blew."

"Well, well!" exclaimed the noble dupe; "I shall be satisfied if he achieves less ambitious performances; let him win the money I've put upon him, and I'll bless the only pickpocket that ever came within the attraction of my purse."

"There, my lord, is the balance," observed the money-lender, handing a bundle of notes to the Earl; "you will find six hundred and fifty pounds."

"I thought it was seven hundred," returned the Marquis lazily, as if the deficit was not of the slightest importance; but more for the sake of making an observation.

"And so it was."

"Yes," added Mr Shallow, "but I was compelled to raise it from Gibbs, and he is such a screw, as you know, my lord."

"But I have nothing to do with that," observed his lordship. "You agreed to——"

"Pardon my interruption," replied the money-lender. "Should the further reduction be an objection, I will return the acceptance, and receive back the advance."

"But it's gone; the skirt of every five-pound note's vanished round the corner three days ago," rejoined the Marquis. "Return, indeed!"

"In that case," observed Mr Shallow, "I suppose there is no

alternative. Gibbs said that the money he had to lay out was General Waftam's, and nothing less than sixty per cent. would satisfy the gallant general ; then there was his commission, and—and—mine," added the lawyer, with a trifling hesitation.

"Never mind the odd fifty, Tom," said the Marquis. "Come, we shall be late for the Park;" and bidding farewell to Mr Shallow, the noble pair quitted the apartment.

When their backs were turned, Mr Shallow pushed out the left side of his cheek with his tongue, and stretching out his fingers from the extreme tip of his nose, seemed to be indulging in a tune with a fast movement on an imaginary pianoforte.

CHAPTER V.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Everybody understands that. That is laughing, and no mistake ; and it is a matter worthy of regard, that the effect of the risible muscles can be described with so much facility and simplicity. 'Tis a very different affair with weeping. We never yet saw an attempt to portray the accompanying sounds of distilling briny tears from the fountain of the eyes. "Boo, ooo, ooo," comes as near as any vowels or consonants that we can scrape from the grammar of our brain ; but this maiden endeavour to give an epitome of the shedding of Sorrow's liquid is, we confess, a truly lame and impotent one.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" It was a hearty laugh, as full and joyous a one as ever rung from a pair of youthful lips, and sounded as if care could never find an echo there.

Mounted on the box of a Brighton coach, sat Lord Hunting-castle, a tall, pale, thin, and delicate-looking person, holding the reins of four spirited and high-conditioned horses. They were just about starting from the Regent circus, and a crowd of gaping and admiring idlers stood looking at the dashing "drag," while a liveried guard stood behind blowing a key-bugle to ravish their delighted ears.

And this was the height of an English nobleman's ambition !—nor has the precedent been a solitary one—to mock the manners and pursuits of a stage-coachman ; to ruffianize the mind, which should have been cultivated for ornament and example, and to glean the choice slang and select sentiments from society better imagined than more particularly described. But ere censur

wings her shafts too freely, let justice hear the advocate for truth and considerate mercy.

Lord Huntingcastle was one "more sinned against than sinning." He was a child of fortune and misfortune, and was indebted to the former for the accruing evils of the latter. Left at an early age his own master, with but imperfect rudiments of education, devoid of the means either to obtain an honourable livelihood, or maintain the appearance and position which his birth and station demanded, and still having the shadow of a large reversionary inheritance before him, it is a matter of no surprise that he should anticipate the substance through the too common channels by which such ends are accomplished, and thus become the prey of those ravenous wretches ever on the watch for plundering inexperience.

Vice, like crime, is seldom plunged into suddenly. The steps of gradation are so regular, that few take a precipitate leap into the swamp of ruin. Thoughtlessness, extravagance, and such-like preliminaries form the elementary introduction to the noviciate.

From bad to worse, Lord Huntingcastle's career progressed. Abandoned to his own free will and warped inclination, young, untutored, unchecked, without one friendly monitor to warn him from the rock he was hurrying towards, waylaid and surrounded by a set of harpies and reckless swindlers, urging him on to every objectionable pursuit, and never fanning a latent spark of a redeeming quality or attribute in his nature—who shall dare to cast the stone, and say, "This man was *not* more sinned against than sinning."

And here he was, at last (and where is the wonder?) the proud proprietor and coachman of a Brighton stage.

"All right," exclaimed the guard.

"Give 'em their—keck—heads," said his lordship, and away the horses sprung to the well-known words as the clothing was stripped from their glossy and polished skins.

"Do tell us—keck—Bill," said the noble coachman, tipping the off-leader a stinging flip which cracked between the saddle and the collar, "Do tell us, Bill, how the—keck—plant is to be managed."

The individual addressed by the plebeian name of "Bill," was a little common-looking person occupying the box seat, who wore the appearance of being anything but a gentleman, and yet he *was* one by hereditary descent, although many, and among the number his own father—the bravest of the brave, and noblest of the

noble—could not but have equivocal opinions concerning the legitimacy of his claim.

“The thing’s in a nut-shell,” replied he. “Miss Bellevue, like a *parvenue* that she is, is superlatively impressed with the honour of an introduction to the ranks of the aristocracy.”

“Speak plain,” rejoined Lord Huntingcastle. “You mean she’s—keck—figged a little with vanity at knowing you and—keck—Lady William.”

“Precisely so,” returned his companion, “and I have *determined* to turn the affair, by hook or by crook, to my own particular advantage. If what we have said does not induce the old lady to have my much-esteemed friend——”

Here his lordship burst again into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

“Quietly and comfortably,” continued the speaker when the interruption had ceased, “so that all things can be decided sociably and the spoil appropriated to our present designs and necessities, we intend to go the entire pig, and force her to take him, *nolens volens*.”

“By God, Bill !” exclaimed his lordship, “your governor’s prediction—keck—about scragging will come to be verified as sure as—keck—I shall be member for Handover ”

“That it will,” replied his companion, in that still, small voice which the quickest ear could not catch a syllable of, and then adding in an audible tone, “No, no, no ; if there’s any scragging in the matter, my much-esteemed friend will have his aerial dance *solus*. I intend running no risk of danger.”

“But give us—keck—the particulars of—keck—the manœuvre,” said Lord Huntingcastle.

“They have gone to Paris under the most favourable auspices,” rejoined his companion, “where I hope all will be settled without my or Lady William’s immediate interference. If, however, the old lady should not be caught with my much-esteemed friend’s chaff, and the light of our respective countenances be necessary to rivet the fetters, we shall proceed there at once, upon the receipt of such intelligence, and then,” continued the speaker, “if extremes *must* be resorted to, nothing short of a rape will be considered one. Indeed, I have not decided whether that shall not be the very first step on my arrival. I think it would be a positive and conclusive one. Shilly-shallying in such cases is so trying to one’s temper and patience.”

"Bill," returned the noble lord, "I—keck—love you, upon my soul; you are such a ——" and his lordship expressed the sense of the word "gory" in its most vulgar definition—"desperate rascal," continued he.

"Trifles never stop me where money's concerned," added his companion.

The coach rolled merrily along. Clouds of dust rose as it whirled up hill and down, and scarcely was it stopped for a change of horses, than "Hold fast!" cried his lordship, and away they went, a match for the fleet hours. But what familiar face is that inside the vehicle? Our chronicler was not mistaken, although in doubt as to the identity. It was the countenance of Bosky Tom.

Lounging in a corner with his back to the horses, there he sat in dreary blissfulness, reflecting on the past, present, and the future.

"A lord for my dragsman!" thought Tom, "that's not bad. Shouldn't wonder if *I* become a nobleman myself some day. Reguery afore now's been the pip for a coronet, and although there *may* be some damn'd thieves in this world, I'll be bless'd if I a'nt a damnable."

Sitting opposite to him was a gentleman in sombre sables, lank in person and lank in spirit. He was journeying to Brighton for the benefit of the shampooing baths, after the loss of his bill to prevent people treating their lungs to the fresh breezes on a Sunday, and enjoying their "baked mutton and *taters*" on the seventh of the week. The saintly M.P. and patron of religious charlatanism was more than usually depressed. His eyes were frequently turned upwards like those of a thirsty duck catching the few and far between drops from a summer cloud. Now and then a groan of anguish bubbled from his sympathetic bosom, and dropped from his tongue, the fair representative of the sudden twinge of a spasm.

"Ain't you well, sir?" at length was the considerate query from Bosky Tom.

"In body, tolerably so," replied the stranger. "It is not physical pain I am suffering," continued he. "I groan in the spirit."

"Indeed!" rejoined Tom. "I thought it came from the belly."

"When I think," resumed the stranger, "of the number of people continually going to the devil, of the flocks on the highway to sin, of the apathy in the clergy and legislature in not

closing the yawning gates, and thereby force them, as it were, into the hedgerows of grace and fields of bliss, I feel myself an abandoned shepherd, and greatly in want of sheep-dogs, crooks, and other reclaiming assistants."

Bosky Tom stared with surprise, and began to imagine his fellow-passenger was not quite weather-proof in his upper stories—in other words, cracked in his top tile.

"If the country was threatened with invasion from a foreign enemy," continued the stranger, "or the City of London on fire from Temple bar to Bishopsgate street, then our government would bestir themselves to prevent and check the visitations. But now that Beelzebub has not only threatened to come, but has actually arrived—the arch-fiend to man, the cloven-footed rampant enemy of the world—and is preparing souls by bundles, just like lucifer-matches are dipped, for a universal conflagration, not a voice is raised in the senate, save my own, and then but to be scoffed and laughed at, as a warning to the benighted and lost."

Bosky Tom was more than ever puzzled. Theology was not one of the abstruse studies that had occupied his time or attention, and, like most men, he had little inclination to enter upon a subject of which he knew nothing.

After a short silence and his fellow-passenger had evinced a great degree of restlessless, perchance at not receiving any encouragement to continue riding his hobby; he inquired abruptly,

"Pray, sir, what do you think will become of religion, and all moral control, if the present system of walking, riding, rowing, eating, and drinking is to continue on a Sunday?"

"May the devil sink my eternal hopes," replied Bosky Tom, trying to look pious, "if I know *what* will become of our holy religion! Folks now-a-days are such beggars to swear and come the rowdy. Howsomever, there's this blessed consolation," continued he, "for the nobs of the church—if there wasn't no sinners there'd be nò parsons, and what a lock-jaw that would be for them bigwigs who get so sleek and fat, and live such cozy lives by telling people of what they *ought* to do, and what they *ought not* to do, and at the same time needn't take the lead by showing 'em how, particularly if in any ways inconvenient. Bless'd if I worn't cut out for a slap-up bishop, I know."

And with this sentiment of sincerity we will leave our passengers on the road.

CHAPTER VI.

It was a hot, glowing afternoon in the thirsty month of July ; “ the season ” had reached its apex, and the votaries of fashion were thronging the ring in that hot-bed of vanity, Hyde park, to flit their painted wings in the hour prescribed. Up and down, round and round the crowd went, pedestrian and equestrian, observing and observed. “ But who cares for the mass ? ” exclaims an impatient reader. Then let us particularize and work the woof that at length is to complete the thread of our eventful history.

“ Here he comes,” shouts a footman out of place to a brother flunky in a like out-of-a-situation, as between the closely-wedged ranks the Marquis D’Horsay drove his splendid cabriolet. The gazed of all gazers, and admired of all admirers—except, by the way, of a few anxious-minded tradesmen, who seemed to take but little pleasure in seeing their property thus shown off to the best of advantage—the Marquis held his course. A smile played upon his lips, and it might have continued there, for that day at least, had not a sallow-complexioned person, mounted on a seedy-looking horse, an animal that might have safely been warranted quiet to ride or drive in double or single harness, spurred to the wheel of the Marquis’s cab, and, doffing his hat with as much politeness as his nature would permit, presented his card.

We have no doubt that Hamlet—that is, the *original* Hamlet—was exceedingly unnerved when delivering his maiden speech to the fay of his premature immortal governor ; but we much question whether that fine young Denmark gentleman was a whit more bloodless about the jaws than the Marquis upon seeing this diminutive piece of pasteboard. It was fortunate for his good looks that a speck, a mere atom, of rouge had been spread carefully on either cheek, or many an envious eye might have detected, and babbling tongue proclaimed, that he was in the early but fast stage of fading and running to seed.

“ I will call upon you to-morrow morning,” faltered the Marquis. “ You may rely upon my word.”

“ That’s enough, sir,” replied the unwelcome intruder, turning his horse, and leaving the Marquis to breathe the free air of heaven, instead of the confined atmosphere of that dwelling,

yclept "a sponging-house," which he possessed the authority and power to inflict.

Mr Lipcombe, for it was he *in propria persona*, enjoyed the distinction of being a fashionable bum; some dubbed him, from his sayings and doings, "a spicy bum,"—others, "a bum of the first water;" but it was unanimously consented to and admitted by all, that Mr Lipcombe was anything but a *common* bum. He was no grab, no clutcher of coat collars or tapper of shoulders; that kind of business had been given up "in the days that we went gipsying, a long time ago." The way in which Mr Lipcombe now effected a capture—(not with the intention of perpetrating a plebeian pun)—was quite *captivating*. He had a professional smile for the occasion, like an opera-dancer at the foot-lights, and merely presented his card, as on this occasion, or called and left one at the domicile of the unhappy wight, whose body was commanded, by her most gracious Majesty, to be held in safe keeping, &c. &c., as a gentle hint of the power and trust reposed in him. But it may be naturally asked, by those in the enviable state of beatitude and ignorance of duns and bums, the reason of so much delicacy in "a worm and maggot of the law." A little monosyllable, composed of a brace of vowels and a diphthong, will answer the query satisfactorily,—the "fee" expectant.

The same reward stimulates the surgeon to cut the festering cancer from the suffering wretch; the mercenary advocate to hack the character of the witness under his lash, or to shelter the criminal and condemn the innocent; the priest to shrive the penitent at his latest gasp; virtue to stoop to vice, and vice to don the garb of virtue. All, all are moved by the like spring of acquisitiveness. The "fee" commands humanity, whether for good or for evil.

It was a fortunate circumstance for our hero that Mr Lipcombe dealt so extensively in the delicate art of refined bumming; for when men throw themselves, as it were, unreservedly into the lap of fickle Fortune, it is quite surprising how frequently she drops unexpected plums into their mouths, and there was one already prepared for the Marquis, which must have been lost had he, when called, been found wanting.

That remarkably plethoric and ruby-faced gentleman, with a good old English roast-beef expression, is the son of a king, and as kind-hearted, jovial, left-handed sprig of royalty as ever





cracked a joke or a bottle. Most men have enemies; but if Lord Theophilus Fitzgordin has one, he is *a rascal*.

The beau on the wane, riding by his side on that perfection of a horse, is Sir George. There can be but *one* Sir George, and, take him for all in all, it would require a good tailor, a good hatter, bootmaker, and barber, and an ounce of rouge, to have the chance of looking upon his like again.

And here comes the finest horsewoman in England, Nelly, the Bolton-street *belle*. The horse that carries her rears, dances, and plunges as she checks his ambitious longings for a race; and yet there she sits, a part and parcel of the noble animal that bears her, and cares no more for his kicks than the fruitless ones of Count Catalany to avoid a certain annuity mentioned by the Earl of Chesterlane in an earlier stage of these sayings and doings, and on account of which the cool thousand had been netted some time since.

Talk of a gentleman, and his hat appears, and a particularly broad-brimmed one it is. But surely his lordship is half equipped for a tournament or "raree-show" of some kind or other. See that charger caparisoned with purple bridle bedizened, as of old, with silver mountings and things to make the vulgar stare "and ope wide their jaws with gaping wonder!" No, the Earl has fresh whims at the flow and ebbing of the tide, and this is of them.

There rolls one of the Earl's carriages, a handsome chariot, faultless in make and colour. The horses, servants, and all pertaining to the turn-out, are unexceptionable. But, confound our specky spectacles! they *must* have deceived us. Its fair occupant we have seen "fretting a brief hour on the stage" of many a minor, and whose *honied* strains never found favour in our ears. How, then, does she go thus attended? We have only to repeat that, with the moon, his lordship's caprices and fancies change, and this *was* of them.

"The flower of the Court"—when the Whigs were in—is that tall, dark, and brigand-looking man, with a *paget* hat, cantering leisurely along, with his chin well up, and a black mustache sprouting on his upper lip. He looks on exceedingly good terms with himself and mankind; but more particularly with himself, and has no reason to be ashamed of anything *in*

terra, save the consanguinity of one we left on the box of the Brighton coach with Lord Huntingcastle.

That well-made, fair horseman, with aquiline nose and devil-may-care expression, is an attractive light among the weaker sex, and bears "his blushing honours thick upon him," in being considered their bright *castle ray*. He wore, in days gone by, his arm in a patent leather sling, which was remarkably conspicuous in the omnibus box, and—from exquisite sympathy, perchance—in that locality caused an eminent cancatrice to swoon and utter a few hysterical notes exceedingly uneuphonious.

And here is a soldier, one ready for war as a game cock trimmed and spurred. He "never sued to friend or enemy," and loves a quarrel with all his heart. His fierce eagle eyes proclaim the fire within the veins and intricacies of his frame, and so long as vent is periodically given, no matter the channel, be it through a straw, a dry bone, or a *black bottle*. Some years since, so runs the fable, a certain colonel's lady, who loved her liege lord neither wisely nor too well, found favour and protection in this son of Mars. On the pinions of love they winged their hasty flight; but to a distance neither long nor wide. From their place of rest a message was dispatched, acknowledging the fault, and expressing a decisive readiness to bear the brunt withal. The answer from the injured husband, however, staggered even this man, who never blanched at danger. It was neither upbraiding nor lamenting. On the contrary, this was the marrow and pith of the reply:—"The colonel presents his compliments, and begs to convey the assurance of his belief that the lady in question was ever of that order denominated frail; that now he has satisfactory proof of the tangible grounds on which his opinion was formed, and he begs to return his sincere thanks for the obligation he labours under for the facility rendered in getting rid of so very unpleasant a partner of his bed and board."

Philosophy, if this was not thy handicraft, your successful rival, GOOD SENSE, had more than a finger in the pie.

A four-in-hand is always charming to gaze upon. It is a sight that commands the admiring attention of those whose ærie was in the cedar top, down to that humble fledgling whose nest was composed of straw in a corner, little less attractive than that in which many a vagabond rat has squeaked his amorous lay. And

here comes one, the very pink of drags, with "a fine old English gentleman" holding the ribbons with skill unsurpassable. See how quietly he threads the maze, and steers his little team without the slightest labour or confusion. That is the father of fast coaches, now almost extinct, and was the subject of the well-known Cambridge song, of which this is the chorus:—

"The road, the road, hurrah for the road !

In tandem, gig, or phaeton ;

We love to be with the gay and free,

When tooled by matchless Peyton."

That gentleman in black, with a face white as Desdemona's linen, so exceedingly vulgarly described by her jealous monster, and driving a tilbury so near perfection that its faults might be compared only to anything invisible, is just returned from a long sojourn on the continent. There, it is said, his vast wealth increased like a snowball being rolled gently on, and now he has come to rival a Devonshire in his princely taste. No matter what, be it his opera-box, carriage, castle, or any other of his multifarious equipages, appendages, and establishments, the most costly taste and lavish expense are bestowed upon them. He is "an Earl we wot of high degree," and the sun that tips the turrets of Pembroke shines on no mushroom pile.

Genius seldom gets a share of the loaves and fishes, not unfrequently bestowed on addled brains and dolts whose heads are hollow as scooped turnips. And yet there is consolation to her lean-fed children of ambition that now and then, like cherubs' visits to this ignoble planet, or such like disinterested deeds of pure unadulterated charity, one of their thin ranks gapes in a storm, and lo ! a pearl drops into his mouth.

Such was the case with that swarthy, circumcised driver of the cabriolet now passing. Necessity struck his head, and forthwith flew some bright sparks, although, it must be admitted, she had to rap with a will. It was no easy task, but one of labour suited to the thews and sinews of a blacksmith. However they came, the tinder was ignited, and at length, after a few productions of equivocal and very doubtful success, 'Runnymede' set the town in a blaze. The *much* better half of one dismissed from the parade of life, leaving his major self an abundance of the blood and sinews of society, was attracted by this curiosity of literature, and, smiling upon him, endowed the object of her re-

gard with a very pretty per centage of all her worldly goods. Then the favoured of Fortune wiped his pen, and, abandoning the precarious calling of a bookmaker, joined the traders in politics with cap in hand to catch the waifs and strays in pseudo-patriotism.

And here comes, all smiles and curls, one of the fairest of the creation. She looks the lady from the stirrup, through which a mouse-like foot peeps, to the beaver pressing her brow. She rides alone, and does several things alone which would be found difficult to imitate by the many. Among others, she inflates the lungs of fame through the medium of authorship, and the united efforts of the goddess and the publishers produce puffs of more than ordinary power. 'Emily, or the Love Match,' 'Melanthe,' and a few of the small fry, minor productions have, by dint of sugar candy, been swallowed by patrons of circulating libraries, and the pills, forsooth, required little gilding from such a charming dispenser.

But what is this? An open, worn out, yellow fly, drawn at snail-pace by a flea-bitten grey, so old and jaded that he can scarcely crawl. His skin, too, is so contracted upon his meagre frame that the bones seem ready to start through it, and altogether the turn-out looks little more attractive than the hearse at a parish workhouse. The driver is on a par with the sorry hack he is urging to draw—by dint of application to a certain raw—its weary length along. Thin, bent, and decrepit, with garments tattered and negligently arranged, more especially a flabby belcher neckerchief twisted carelessly round his throat; he steers the carriage to a conspicuous position near Cumberland gate, and stops his wearied, persecuted steed.

"Now, Chaffy," said one of the two young *roué*-looking men, "out with your pipe and smoke like a steamer."

This address to the coachman caused him to dive his fingers under the cushion of his driving-box, and extract a short, black pipe, which, after charging and igniting, he applied to his lips, and willingly complied with the order.

This strange exhibition quickly attracted a mob round and about the carriage, and various were the surmises concerning it. At length a voice called out—

"It's Mr Purgisson, the Marquis of Riverford, on a spree."

"So it is," echoed another; "and there's Betsy, the Earl of Raspberry hill, with him."

“Hooray!” shouted a third. “Boil us up a gallop. Now we *shall* have a lark.”

Without noticing these remarks, the Marquis of Riverford, for the informant was correct in his identity as to the occupants of the fly, unfastened a hamper at his feet, and, lifting from its capacious jaws a huge brown-paper parcel of the largest sandwiches that ever were cut from loaf or ham, together with a stoffe bottle of porter, containing some gallons, he doled out a liberal quantity of the refreshments to “Chaffy,” and said to his companion, “Now, Betsy, give us a flourish.”

With this his noble plagiarist placed a long tin horn to his mouth, and made the welkin ring with its harsh, shrieking breath.

Hundreds of pairs of eyes were drawn to the quarter from whence the sound emanated, and the majority, seeing the drift of the joke, sent countless heads half off with laughter.

“It’s the Marquis all over,” said one. “See, he’s offering a sandwich to his uncle, the bishop, with a pull at the pewter.”

To each of his aristocratic acquaintances within hail the Marquis proffered his hospitality, and was especially pressing to those who evinced most reluctance in accepting it.

“Take a moistener,” said he, “if it’s only to lay the dust in your choker.”

Failing, however, in prevailing upon scions of nobility to insult their stomachs with such common viands, he had little difficulty in foisting them upon the representatives of the mobility.

Chaffy, the coachman, continued to eat in silence and perfect harmony with the buried shavings of the unclean beast, and ever and anon to assuage the oft-created thirst with deep potations from the pewter.

“Have ye had enough?” inquired the Marquis.

“Quite, my lord,” gasped Chaffy, evincing symptoms of repletion.

“Then look out,” said the Marquis, emptying the remainder of the sandwiches upon the ground to be scrambled for by the delighted pedestrians in the immediate vicinity, and giving the porter to a willing bystander to help himself and pass the bottle.

“Now,” continued the Marquis, “drive on, Chaffy;” and slowly, it is needless to say, the carriage proceeded with its eccentric occupiers—original and copyist.

We caught but a glimpse of him ; but that pale, emaciated, dwindled shadow of humanity just passed, closely wrapped in his chariot and securely protected from the fresh air, is a Marquis also ; but a very different pillar of the state to the one foregoing. That is the Marquis of Hereford, a man without one redeeming quality in the multitude of his glaring, damning vices. But more of him anon.

CHAPTER VII.

It was night. The proselytes of pleasure were in the very zenith of their revelry. Lights streamed, flashed, and blazed, from countless casements. Music pealed from rooms crammed with jostling throngs, and the dance and the laugh, and the song and the jest, were strained from many a wearied limb, and still more wearied heart. A laugh ! *that* was no laugh. It burst from the lips of a gamester as he threw a main and won his stake. But that curse was sincere. It fell muttered from the tongue of his friend who had borrowed the counters to back him out. " Ha, ha, ha ! " Aye, roar on, thou dicer. Fortune rings in the clatter of thy throw. " Seven's the main. Eleven's a nick. Ha, ha, ha ! " The money's won, and he stakes and throws again.

In a gorgeously-furnished and well-lighted room, forming a part and parcel of that mighty whole, " Crockford's," a group of men surrounded a large oval table covered with green baize. It was accurately divided by white lines, with the words " In " and " Out " printed at the four corners, and in the centre something resembling the squares of a chess-board were marked with numbers in each division. In the middle of the table, and before a wired-top box containing the bank, two attendants stood with rakes in their hands watching the result of each throw, calling it out, and paying and receiving the sums won and lost.

A little in arrear of the players a tall and rather spare man stood, with a pale and strongly-marked face, light grey eyes, and frosted hair. His dress was common in the extreme, and his appearance generally might be denominated of that order. The only peculiarity, if peculiarity it can be called, was a white cravat folded so thickly round his neck that there seemed to be quite a superfluity of cambric in that quarter.

A smile—it might be of triumph, it might be of good nature, of satisfaction, of benevolence, of good-will—no, it could not be either of these, save the former, and yet a smile was there. He was the proprietor of this leviathan of earthly hells, and it would be passing strange, indeed, for one who had drawn his mammoth fortune from extravagance and reckless folly to wear a look other than as a jay bends to the egg he is about to suck. But there he stood, turning a pleasant—it almost amounted to a benevolent—look upon the progress of the hazard, and at each countenance of the players.

Among the group, sitting and standing about the table, were the Marquis D'Horsay and Lord Chesterlane. The former bore a disconsolate mood; while the latter evinced thorough satisfaction and confidence in his thoughts, or want of them; for good humour shone in his face, and he now and then snapped his fingers in very good imitation of castanets, accompanied by a whistle both merry and loud. Large piles of red and white counters were before him, showing that Fortune had favoured his designs upon her benefits.

“You're in luck, to-night, Tom,” observed the Marquis.

“Yes,” replied his lordship, “I have the pull. But what are you doing?”

“Doing!” repeated the Marquis. “I'm done; sown up; drawn as fine as spun glass; eased of all anxiety from having my pockets picked in my way home; and entertain, as you may see, a lively satisfaction in the pleasant carelessness of my situation.”

“By the nectar, honied look of the sweetest girl that ever pointed her glass to the omnibus box!” swore his lordship, “your looks and tone carry poor conviction to the sincerity of the axiom. Help yourself” continued he, pushing a heap of counters towards his friend, “and stick it on thick.”

Aye, “help yourself,” has been the motto of Lord Chesterlane, since whereof the memory of a companion runneth not to the contrary. All, all, great and small, “help yourselves.” There can be no end where there is no beginning. “Help yourselves.” There can be no check in perpetual motion. “Help yourselves.” There should be no hindrance to such generous bounty. “Help yourselves.” Eat, drink, sponge, borrow, drain, screw, squeeze. “Help yourselves.”

A reckless mind dictates recklessness in the most trivial

matters. That of a debtor or a gamester is ever thus disposed. Either would eat his bread and butter, pepper his mutton chop, get into an omnibus, extort a loan and risk it at a cast, with the very self-same expression of feeling and manner. Nothing to lose, and anything to gain. Who cares?

In a heap—yes, in one uncounted, promiscuous heap—the Marquis gathered the ivory cheeks on to the divison in which the monosyllable “In” was legible, and in a standing posture called “Five.”

“Five’s the main,” cried one of the croupiers, looking with as much indifference at the dice as they were sent spinning across the table from the hand of the caster as if they had been a couple of marbles shot from the bent knuckle of a schoolboy.

“A nick, by Love’s sugar-candy kiss!” said the Earl.

In a trice the counters were examined by one of the attendants, and an addition made to their numbers in the sum gained.

With a flushed cheek and flashing eye the Marquis scraped the whole again upon the “In.”

The Earl looked, and Sir George—for he was one of that distinguished party—felt almost inclined to rub off a black patch from a pimple on the extreme corner of his lip as the lump was staked, as Bosky Tom would have graphically described it, “at a single fly.”

“I’m following your directions only,” observed the Marquis, shaking the dice.

“I am quite delighted to see that you’ve not only followed, but overtaken them,” replied the Earl, backing his friend in the venture by risking a pony upon the throw.

“Five,” again briefly called the caster.

“Five’s the main,” echoed the croupier.

The stake and bets were heavy. Down came the box.

“Seven,” cried the croupier, as the dice were uncovered; “seven to five,” continued he, pushing them towards the Marquis, who again had to rattle the boxes for a result.

With a sturdy bang they fell upon the baize.

“Seven,” was the monotonous cry of the croupier, “and the caster’s in.”

That was a draw upon the bank, that was. The money had been doubled twice, and the Marquis had the pull with a vengeance.





"By the shade and shadows of our united whiskers!" exclaimed the Earl of Chesterlane, "I begin to feel a monomaniacal itching for the clutching of that box."

"Seven's the main," called the Marquis; and if his voice was husky and his tongue slightly parched, and if his heart beat more quickly than usual, and if his hand shook triflingly, and his lips were compressed like one in desperate purpose fixed, still the cause was sufficient for all these semblances of a mind ill at ease.

Hearts, yes even those hearts assembled there, fluttered at all sorts of paces; in canters, hand-gallops, speed, and racing time, as the fortunate caster once more grasped the dice.

Not one single counter did he draw, but, as before, let the whole winnings and borrowings remain a stake for a single cast.

The main was seven.

"Eleven's a nick," said the croupier.

"Give me change," replied the Marquis, smiling blandly, pushing the whole of the checks from him with the exception of a trifling representative of twenty-five pounds, and then, in a careless tone calling the same number again, rolled the box gracefully from his hand.

"Deuce ace, the caster's out," called the attendant.

"May I never win plate, cup, or match," said the Earl enthusiastically; "may I never bask beneath the smile of a sunny eye, if I ever saw neater play. Upon my honour," continued he, addressing the Marquis, "one might picture to the imagination that the box was glass for such perfect throwing. It occasions a doubt whether eyes may not penetrate through wood."

The Marquis gathered the notes offered to him into a thick roll, and placing them in his hat,—for his pockets were not constructed for holding money; his tailor, in the plenitude of his wisdom and experience, considered them as appendages quite superfluous,—kissed the tips of his fingers to the Earl, and bending a free and graceful bow to his remaining friends, took his departure, with the consoling reflection that he could meet Mr Lipcombe at the time promised, with the jaunty air of a man come to settle with a bum.

"By my coach and osses!" exclaimed Sir Vincent Twist, a tall, well-made, strongly-marked, premature wrinkled, toothless—or, in the phraseology of the ring, all the front rails gone—badly

dressed individual, sitting opposite the Earl. "By my coach and osses!" repeated he, "Fishy's bank must be replenished."

"It's the very (hiccup) seediest thing (hiccup) a fellow could possibly (hiccup) wish to draw upon," replied the Marquis of Riverford, leaning on the table with folded arms, and looking at the diminished capital with blinking eyes and unsteady gaze.

He had just come from a distinguished meeting in the neighbourhood of the Haymarket, where, at a certain house having his escutcheon for its sign, he had been regaling a motley crowd of cabmen and nymphs with the liberal present and free gift of a butt of sherry, with divers dozens of champagne, and all sorts of distillations and rebellious liquors for the blood.

"I shall put no fresh bank down to-night," said the proprietor, approaching the table.

The luck had been, *mirabile dictu*, on this night against the table from the commencement of play, and he was too old a hand to provoke a continuance of the run.

"Come, come," remarked Lord Chesterlane. "It will turn. Put some more money down."

"No, my lord," was the brief reply. "Not to-night."

"Then I'll break what's left," rejoined Sir Vincent Twist.

"Aye (hiccup), do," added the Marquis of Riverford; "and I'll (hiccup) go you halves."

"What can you cover?" inquired Sir Vincent of the croupier.

"Two hundred and fifty pounds," replied the attendant.

"Then here goes for it," added Sir Vincent Twist, preparing for a cast.

"Mind, I'm (hiccup) to share," said the Earl of Riverford.

"You stand in, then, do you?" inquired the Baronet.

"To be sure (hiccup) I do," replied the Earl. "I've a liquorish (hiccup) tooth for bones. The meat's (hiccup) sweetest as you (hiccup) approach the (hiccup) skeleton."

Sir Vincent Twist threw a main. The bank was broken.

A shout, a wild tumultuous shout of triumph burst from the lips of the winners as the money was handed to them.

"I knew we (hiccup) should skin him (hiccup) like an eel," observed the Earl.

"You won't put another bank down?" said Sir Vincent.

"No," replied the proprietor. "Not to-night."

"We'll play ye (hiccup) for your shirt, then (hiccup), if you like," said the Earl.

"I'll set you a hundred against your watch and chain," added the Baronet more in jest than earnest; but he was taken at his word.

"I accept it," replied the proprietor, dispossessing himself of the articles mentioned, and placing them by the side of the Baronet's stake.

Fortune, capricious jade, still kept her cold shoulder turned to the head of the establishment. Sir Vincent threw, and threw in, while a roar of laughter from the surrounding spectators welcomed his victory.

The pale, consumptive light of early morning now came struggling through chink and crevice. Through the massive hangings a ray of bright sunshine shot itself into the room like the reproachful monitor of Time. Glare and tinsel, glitter and shine, all faded before this gleam of the fresh new-born day. That which looked gay as the gandy wing of the butterfly now became sickly, and tarnished, and wearying to the eye.

"Before going to my virtuous (hiccup) sheets," observed the Marquis of Riverford, gaining the street, supported by his friend Sir Vincent Twist, "I'm going to add (hiccup) to my choice (hiccup) collection of door-bells (hiccup), knockers, scrapers (hiccup), brass plates, and po- (hiccup) -licemen's hats. Yes," continued he, steadying himself, and endeavouring to look profoundly sage, "policemen's hats (hiccup) are *the* curiosities after all. I look (hiccup) with a degree of reverence (hiccup) at a policeman's hat, *particularly* if (hiccup) slightly damaged."

"You'd better let me see you home," replied his companion, considerably.

"I'm always at home," rejoined the Marquis; "even in (hiccup) a station house. In fact," continued he, "I never (hiccup) feel more at home than (hiccup) in a station house."

"Perhaps it's use," returned the Baronet drily, as he dragged his noble friend along Piccadilly.

"Perhaps (hiccup) it is," added the Marquis. "But I never (hiccup) stopped to inquire. I only (hiccup) allege the fact."

And he supported this theory by a practical demonstration, for *that* morning he courted the honey, heavy dew of slumber within the walls of a station house.

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE is a greatness to be achieved, even in littleness. The proposition may be startling, but we vouch for—nay, we will prove its accuracy. The industrious fleas are very small, and yet, as *fleas*, they have attained a notoriety and distinction which myriads of their species never have and never can hope to obtain. Still, their bulk, unlike a celebrated frog of old, has not increased by puffing. Now, there are countless occupations in life of less profit and importance than even those of the industrious fleas; and yet there is not one but has some colossal leader, some giant pioneer who wields the axe of clearance. In the most humble grades of this cold potatoe world the observer will find a Napoleon. We remember well a deceased dustman who, with the brothers of that simple craft, was admitted to be, if not very great at the cart, still it was consented to by all that he was a *beggar* at the bell. A sweep, too, one who wore a dangling chain and seals from his sooty fob, we remember as a bright exhalation of yesterday. That man had arrived at a state of obesity, and was incapable, long since, of gratifying his ambition for a climb. But there was not a single pigmy apprentice, not a creature in all the intricacies of the trade, from a noviciate of an hour's standing to a great dust contractor, but aspired to tread in the popular footmarks of Bill Bell. He had swept more shot-towers, more gas chimnies—in short, had performed more impossibilities than any preceding “chummy,” and therefore worthily filled the leader's chair. He was the beacon to which numbers pointed; sometimes in the facetious manner of stretching their fingers and pressing their thumbs on the ends of their flattened noses. But still Bill Bell was *the* sweep of his day.

There was another hero, a member of a trade universally allowed to be one grade lower than that of a sweep's. Poor Tom! we think we see ye now; but, thank heaven, it is but the vision of the mind. For, to speak the truth, we never yet had you within the powers of sight, but some other sense was grievously abused.

Within a thousand square yards, Tom, and you were a man we fervently wished farther from us. Still, ‘*palmam qui meruit ferat.*’ Tom was a philosopher, and, moreover, was admitted to be one,

which is a very great achievement in these degenerate and sceptical days. His pleasures and his work were agreeably combined. He could, and did, smoke a joke or a pipe, froth a quart pot of Barclay's best with his used, and some, mayhap, would say abused hand; cram his maw with a prepared and salted snack, whistle, sing, laugh, and all within the very depths and sinks of his labours. There he was a rare bird, and if his plumage was less attractive than that of a black swan, yet among birds of his feather he was a tit of no common note.

Mr George Bobbins, too, was a tit of no common note, or his advertisements belied him. Grand, sublimated, double-distilled essence of the everlasting, at the same time somewhat threadbare, efforts of the Nine—pawnd, pledged, renovated, yet weedy, seedy, greedy, needy, tortured snips, snaps, and scraps; torn, pulled, and culled to deck the systematic puffs of the prince of auctioneers! Can such things be, and the moon not wink?

And there, in his office, sat Mr George Bobbins, with his unaccountable large-brimmed, turned-up hat, shading an unaccountable expression upon his unaccountable countenance. It was not to say exactly ill-favoured. Indeed, there was an inexpressible something which indicated that "once upon a time" it might have been fair and comely; but time, port wine, wear, tear, or claws of the like nature had sadly pulled it about. His complexion wore the unwholesome hue of a thick bilious fog in November, and his eyes of undecided colour were full, and appeared as if a couple of springs were constantly laying all particles of dust that might chance to fly into them. His mouth was very large, and if his teeth were not pearls, they were strong, even, and, as an American would say, ready to "catawampously chaw up" anything at an instant's notice, from a large estate to a hard crust. His figure was tall, and designed to be portly; but the flesh hung flabbily upon his bones, and seemed to shake like jelly in a spoon upon every movement of his frame. His dress consisted of a long dark-brown coat, collared, cuffed, and lined with fur, with a sparkling waistcoat; large and loose dark trowsers, with shoes of a shape resembling a square, and immensely large. Such was the appearance and bearing of George Bobbins on the morning of his introduction to our readers.

Now, we have little doubt but there are many misguided individuals who, from perusing the flowery descriptions of his

delineating pen, think this knight of the hammer to be one of the greasiest, most oily-mannered men that ever scraped a bow or grinned a smile. In our innocence we anticipated to find one softer than eider-down, a whisperer, a meek, tender exotic, a poet spoiled by chance and force of circumstances—in short, anything but that which saluted our eyes and ears.

Politeness goes by gradation. There are some grizzly bears more grizzly than others, both figuratively and literally speaking. And we have no question but some bears take precedence in wild settlements, as bears and bores do in civilized stations by dint of their merits, accomplishments, or assurance; the latter quality, however, carries the day. There is nothing beneath the sun so genial to prosperity as assurance. Brass, brass is the only metal that rings after all. Unpolished if you like, polished if you will; but brass, brass is your standard for success.

Bright or rusty, rough or smooth, by hook or by crook; no matter how, there sat Mr George Bobbins, *the* top-sawyer of auctioneers, a rich and envied man. And was he satisfied with the loaves and fishes amply filling his bushel baskets? By no means! He still regarded, as he ever did, the entire earth to be a dividable lot for his hammer. There was not a mountain, valley, flat, or “undulating, park-like grounds” that met his view, since his eyes were sensible to light, but that he measured for the most advantageous disposal. The beauties of nature, so frequently dwelt upon in seeming rapture by him, were, in truth, valued as so much grist, and what they would bring to the mill. Aye! and the metaphor, though old, is a happy one: for no one can doubt that George Bobbins ground them, as he did all things within the compass of his capacity, as fine as powder. Plate pictures, statuary, heir-looms, jewellery, furniture, toys, curiosities; from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the valuable to the valueless, the auctioneer kept a business-eye upon all, with a view to the one absorbing object of his life—a sale. On the desk before the auctioneer were some thick bundles of catalogues; and surrounding the walls of the office, and at the entrance to it, were numerous placards announcing that various kinds of property were about undergoing the ordeal of a change of ownerships. A few ponderous ledgers and books of account, with some half-dozen long-legged, well-rubbed, antiquated stools, completed the *tout ensemble* of Mr George Bobbins’s place of business.





"Ah! Shallow," exclaimed the auctioneer as the door was flung open, and the shrewd attorney entered. "Ah, Shallow," repeated he, "glad to see you."

"Are you engaged?" inquired Mr Shallow after exchanging the greeting.

"Engaged!" said the auctioneer, in not one of the most melodious voices that ever was heard, "of course I am. I'm always engaged. My time's the public's, not my own. I'm like a hackney coach, at the beck and call of my customers. And, my dear fellow, as you are one, and one of my best, name the job in as few words as possible, and I'll stretch a point to oblige ye."

"Bitchfield's traps are to be——" and the speaker significantly pointed to the back of his thumb over his left shoulder.

"You *don't* say so!" rejoined the auctioneer, getting off his stool, and refreshing himself with a peculiar rub and a shake. "You *don't* say so," repeated he with a look of portrayed satisfaction.

"He's done to a turn," added Mr Shallow in a voice that admitted of no question as to the truth of the assertion. "He's done, you may say, *quite* brown."

"One man's food is another man's poison," piously ejaculated the auctioneer. "What a blessing that is to think of! And is it," continued he, deeply interested in the intelligence, "is it to be a sudden smash, or a launch off an inclined plane?"

"He's walking the plank now," replied the attorney, "and when he comes to the end it will tip up, and overboard he'll go with a ——" and Mr Shallow, in his funny mood, drew a sound from his mouth which resembled the pop of a cork from a soda-water bottle.

"Oh! then I'm to understand he's not quite pickled," rejoined Mr George Bobbins.

"Not pink through," returned the lawyer. "But I've come expressly for a little more salt," continued he, bringing a paper from a secret pocket in the breast of his coat.

"Humph!" observed the auctioneer, interrogatively eying the document as a cat would a mouse.

"This is a bill of sale of all his movables, goods, chattels, and effects," replied Mr Shallow patting the paper almost affectionately. "The land is mortgaged to the teeth," continued he. "His bills are not worth their stamps; but" — and he shook

the document in a waggish humour—"this is as safe as the Bank of England: safer if there's a choice."

"And he requires an advance?" remarked the auctioneer.

"Pre—cisely so," returned the lawyer. "I'll advance half the amount wanted, and you shall make up the other half."

"The per centage?" shortly inquired Mr George Bobbins.

"Will depend on your powers of eloquence," flatteringly responded his friend. "For excepting the sum we shall hand over now"—

"Exactly so," interrupted the auctioneer, anticipating the sequel with profound sagacity. "And what is the amount?"

"Ten thousand," rejoined the attorney.

"Share and share alike, I suppose," returned Mr George Bobbins, with the air of a martyr.

Mr Shallow nodded.

"When is it wanted?" asked the auctioneer.

"To-morrow morning," was the answer.

"And what is it for?" inquired Mr George Bobbins. "Is it to settle on a ——" and the questioner broke out into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, which prevented the conclusion of his query.

"No," replied the attorney. "Quite a different object."

"To make a few matches against your flyers?" said the auctioneer, "and thus drop it as easy as a bird would a moulted feather."

"No," again said the lawyer.

"To have one desperate fling at his old game?" persevered Mr George Bobbins.

"No," once more replied the attorney.

"Then what may the design be?" inquired the auctioneer, tired with his speculations.

"If you had put that question at first," returned Mr Shallow, "you would have saved yourself an infinite deal of breath, as I always reply to feeling interrogations by monosyllables."

"It's discreet, certainly," added the auctioneer. "But you were going to inform me of the object of this last cut on the cards."

"Some men," metaphysically observed Mr Shallow, "are never contented with the pace. If they're going sixteen miles an hour, they want to go twenty. If they're going twenty they

wish to travel thirty, and so they go on increasing in their desires with the speed they arrive at. Now this has been the exact case with Bitchfield. From being a steady coach he became fast, then from being fast he became rapid, and then from rapid he ran away."

"That's the way with nine-tenths of 'em," observed the auctioneer, by way of parenthesis. "They never bolt at first unless they be just from grass, and then a packthread checks them."

"Well!" continued Mr Shallow. "A few open carriages and a few close ones, with fair occupants in all, a fine stud of race-horses, a pack of fox hounds, an open house, nightly visitations at Crockford's, a generous dispositon even to the sweepers of the crossings, are not likely, collectively and respectively, to add to a man's wealth."

"Certainly not," returned Mr George Bobbins, breathing an inward prayer to fate that the contrary was the exact and certain result.

"But even these were insufficient," continued the attorney. "These high-pressure locomotives were not enough to wind up the web fast enough, although for seven years his losses at hazard alone have averaged a *hundred a night*."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the auctioneer. "A hundred a night for seven years?"

"Yes," continued Mr Shallow, "that's the amount. But a few months since he took it into his head to dig for ore, and raised, through me, about sixty thousand to commence operations with. The vein is not yet found," said the lawyer with a chuckle. "But who can tell what these last few pounds may do?"

"Ah!" ejaculated the auctioneer. "Who can tell? A very sensible question, which may remain, for aught I care, unanswered."

"And now this affair's settled," observed the attorney, "what are you doing with Raspberry hill?"

"All's in train for a ——" and Mr George Bobbins brought his clenched knuckles sharply on the desk. "Ah!" continued he, drawing a long breath, "that *will* be a sale. The gems and curiosities, articles of *vertù* and all sorts of things, I shall turn to account from musty nooks that, at another time and upon other occasions, wouldn't fetch the price of old iron, will form the wonder in the annals of auctioneering."

"I suppose there'll be a few introductions," remarked Mr Shallow, with a very sly peep out of the corners of his eyes.

"You'd scarcely believe it," returned Mr George Bobbins, laughing inwardly, "but one of my rascals proposed to introduce a very ancient cradle, that has been kicked about for years up stairs, as the very one Horace Walpole was rocked in. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed the lawyer. "Ha, ha, ha!" and the joint effects of their mirth rang from wall to roof until the very placards vibrated again.

"Good bye, my dear fellow," said the auctioneer, exchanging hands with his friend as he turned to take his departure. "Good bye; God bless ye!" Such was Mr George Bobbins's benediction. And why should he not bless Mr Shallow? God bless us all!

CHAPTER IX.

As if no change had come o'er the spirit of his dream, there the Marquis D'Horsay lolled negligently in his chair of ease, in the same posture and dress, and in the same condition of lassitude, and at precisely the same hour as when we first discovered him at his breakfast without an appetite. There might be, indeed there was, a shade more thought on his brow, and, from a contraction, it would seem not an especially pleasant one.

"The subject's quite exhausted," observed he, fanning himself with one of a heap of unopened, suspicious-looking letters lying on the table before him. "The subject's quite exhausted," repeated he; "I've replied to them in every way and shape. There's not an excuse remaining that can be called original. Duns are gregarious animals, and make their attacks in such flocks that, really, a dictionary of 'calls again to-morrow' would be quickly drawn dry and of little avail. Here," soliloquised the Marquis, looking at the letters a vast deal 'more in sorrow than in anger,' "here I should imagine, at a rough guess, are some thirty applications for the settlement of bills, all in the same legible, unmistakable writing. Now, what *is* one to say to such a monotonous, conglomerated mass? If I say that I *will* pay they *won't* believe me. If I reply that I *can't* pay, still they *don't* believe me. In either case no credit is given, and

that's the most lamentable part of the affair. The rascals decline extending their credit now, let me tell them what I will. How often have I of late given orders of the most extensive nature; and yet, alas! how seldom have they been fulfilled. Instead of obeying them, a bead from the rosary of memory is sent—as the poet has beautifully described it—in the shape of a very long account of very ancient standing, accompanied by entreaties, threats, or petitions, according to the natural disposition of the applicant, or whether he be in want of physic or not. Such being a fair representation of the reversed order of things, I've given up all exertion concerning them. I only desire for them to become in the same listless mood; but they, as yet, evince no such inclination. On the contrary, day by day their energies increase. The knocker, really, is never at rest. And as for these dumb monitors," continued the Marquis, gently poking the heap of letters, "if they increase for the next three months as they have for the last three, paper and wafers, I imagine, will be scarce and difficult to obtain."

At this moment a loud single knock at the street-door was heard.

"Yes," observed the Marquis, as the shock somewhat decomposed the serenity of his nerves;—by the way, these single knocks always do, however practised the ear may become;—"Yes," repeated he, looking at a handsome bronze clock on the mantel-shelf, "it's about the hour they begin this direful thumping, and it lasts, generally, till dinner-time. There ought to be an act of parliament to abate the nuisance,—a nuisance at once profitless, and worse than objectionable. For my part, if I were a misguided creditor, whose sensations I never yet had the felicity of entertaining, I should give myself as little trouble as possible when the case assumed the complexion of hopelessness. But instead of which, the more hopeless, the more devoid of even the visionary perspective of payment the affair is, the more desperately attentive and persevering the unhappy mortals become. Really," said the Marquis, smiling, and running his delicate taper fingers through his luxuriant curls, "the subject *is* interesting! It forms one of those contradictions of human nature which comprises, or should comprise, the heads of—I believe they're called—sermons and lectures."

Knock now succeeded knock in quick succession. Whisper-

ing, half-subdued voices, shuffling of feet, and the oft-repeated closing of the door were sounds that greeted familiarly the ear of the Marquis.

"Not up."—"Not at home."—"Out."—"Engaged," were the varied replies of the porter to the applicants.

"At home to you, sir," said the man of the portal, in an under tone, to one he had been compelled to deny for form's sake.

And who was it that entered with such a swagger of self-importance, tricked out in colours and jewellery, and having the bearing of one crammed with the vanity and conceit of a vulgar mind? Bosky Tom; yes, no other than Bosky Tom. There was no duplicate of this worthy. He stood by himself alone. And it is a matter of congratulation for the well-being of society that his position was isolated; for a few such might have shaken the West and its *wild* inhabitants from their little remaining sense of propriety.

"Ha!" exclaimed the Marquis, lazily turning his head as the door was opened, and his visitor announced. "Ha! And how does Fortune's first favourite progress?"

"Thank ye, kindly, Marquis," replied Tom, taking a chair in a free-and-easy manner, without waiting for an invitation. "As strangers, we're getting on famously; and if not quite such intimate friends as I could wish with the old 'ooman what's always a-playing blind man's buff, yet we're becoming better acquainted every day."

"Night, you should have said," rejoined the Marquis.

"Well! it might have been more proper," rejoined Bosky Tom, drawing from his coat pocket a highly-scented handkerchief, and giving it a flourish, as a preliminary to remove an imaginary particle of dust from his lips. "It might have been more proper," repeated he; "for our gambols with her are by the light of the gas."

"And so you've had a run of luck," said the Marquis, "without any strong pulls upon the bank?"

"Yes; it's been pretty well all one way," replied his visitor.

"Then you've not come upon the fruitless errand of making a demand for any sum that may be considered owing to so flourishing a concern?" returned the Marquis, in a voice which indicated a total indifference as to the object of Bosky Tom's visit.

"Why, Marquis!" replied his companion, in an expostulatory tone; "your bits of stiff are shocking drugs. We can't get 'em done now at any price. And as to your I O U's and checks, we couldn't negotiate with anybody, although we tried in all quarters, except with a trunk and bonnet-box maker. He agreed for so much a pound; but then it was by *weight*, Marquis."

"What a cannibal!" exclaimed the Marquis, with a negligent, idle air. "By weight, eh? Really, the joke is almost good enough to repeat."

"Still it's somewhat of a serious one for us," returned Bosky Tom.

"Is it?" added the Marquis, sleepily. "Indeed!"

"You can't get a friend to join in a bill for a few cool hundreds at a long date?" inquired the creditor.

"My friends' autographs are already procured to the utmost limits of my persuasive capacities," replied the Marquis.

"Not a single cove left?" pleaded Bosky Tom.

"Not a feather," replied the Marquis, briefly.

"Plucked clean?" rejoined Tom, despondingly.

The Marquis closed both his eyes, and nodded a passive assent.

"Poor deluded individuals!" added Tom, commiseratingly.

A pause ensued, during which time the debtor and creditor eyed each other attentively; the former through his apparently closed lashes—the latter out of the extreme corners of his down-cast eyes.

"I must draw ye, somehow," at length ejaculated Bosky Tom.

"We can't afford to lose——"

"Lose!" interrupted the Marquis, quickly; and then, gently gliding again into his manner of ease, said, in a gentle tone, "May I inquire what you have lost?"

"Five thousand pounds you're indebted to us, Marquis," replied his creditor.

"In what coin, or representative of money, was the amount advanced?" inquired the Marquis.

"Counters, as you well know," returned Bosky Tom, in a manner which approached the dogged and sullen.

"Yes," added the Marquis, smiling; "in thin, round pieces of ivory, the five thousand was lent. Supposing, now, I was to invest a small sum of money in tusks, and repay you in your own coin, how would the account stand then?"

"This is old 'ooman's play to talk so," said Bosky Tom, irritably. "You had the money's worth, and must pay, as all men must who play."

"If they possess the wherewithal," replied the Marquis, with imperturbable coolness. "Provided always," continued he, languidly, "their having made themselves legally responsible. Such is the law, I'm given to understand."

"Well!" exclaimed Bosky Tom, "law or no law, I've not come to ask for what I can't have. I thought you might be able to get a kite endorsed by some pigeon who could bear the plucking; but as you say you can't, there's an end to that matter," and the speaker sighed heavily as he concluded the sentence.

"You have some feasible proposal in the background, I see," observed the Marquis. "A little corps of reserve. What is it?"

"This," returned Bosky Tom, "as there seems to be no choice. You know," continued he, "what a splendid advertisement you are."

The Marquis winced.

"There's not such an advertisement," continued Tom, regardlessly, "for the tailor, hatter, coachmaker, horsedealer, hosier, and bootmaker, in the world. I've often thought so, and often said so. Put all the papers together, morning and evening, and all the prospectuses, and all the placards on hoards, and all the walking sandwiches with boards before and behind, and all the perambulating wans, they'll never, said I to my partners, this very day, get such an advertisement as the Marquis *on wheels*."

The Marquis was quite silent during this eulogistic notice of his value in the public gaze: but he looked as if it was anything than flattering unction to his vanity.

"Now, we're a young house," continued Bosky Tom, "and although doing a pretty stroke of business, still we should like to do more."

"Very natural and praiseworthy," said the Marquis.

"And you can assist us, Marquis, in carrying out the intentions."

"Me!" exclaimed the Marquis, drawing himself upright in his chair and looking exceedingly astonished. "No, no!" continued he, shaking his head as if a sudden unpleasant thought had entered there. "I can never descend to the occupation of a

bonnet, however empty the exchequer and ghostly the chance of replenishing it."

"Nor was I going to ask you," replied Bosky Tom. "All we want is for you to let your flashy cab stand for a couple of hours or so at our door, and for you to sit at the table and play, as usual, with *our* money. There can be no objection to that, I suppose."

"None in the smallest degree," rejoined the Marquis, smiling a complete approval to the arrangement. "The conception is in the mildest form disagreeable, if disagreeable at all, and that depends entirely upon the results of my nightly labours. Pray," continued he, "are my winnings to be carried to the old account, or may I feel sufficient interest in the game to ——?" and the Marquis slightly but significantly tapped that part of his trousers where a pocket might be supposed to be.

"Over a hundred," replied Bosky Tom, "and it must go to the old score. Under that amount you may grab."

"A liberal and, at the same time, judicious policy," rejoined the Marquis. "My cab and myself are at your service."

"We understand each other, then?" returned Bosky Tom, preparing to take his departure.

"I should say to perfection," replied the Marquis.

"We shall see you to-night, I hope," added his visitor. "It's Saturday, and after the opera the cab would be sure to draw."

"We, that is the cab and myself, will be at our appointed stations in the very nick of time," rejoined the Marquis. "Fear not."

Upon this Bosky Tom took his departure.

"A very easy way," soliloquized the Marquis, "of getting out of a difficulty. I wish all my creditors would turn their attention to advertising by such means. The cab would then be the most profitable investment I ever possessed, although great, very great difficulty attends my reaching it now. Once in, and I am as safe as Rothschild; but from this door to the step, although not three yards, I feel the most unprotected person living. The truth is," continued the Marquis, "I must devise other means of defence from these attacks than the lynx-eyed watchfulness of my porter. I'll fortify myself within screened walls, like a baron of old, and brave the pressure as the armoured tortoise does the waggon wheel."

CHAPTER X.

IN the sun's glow the fruit ripens, flowers expand, and all things quicken to maturity. And then from maturity they sicken to decay. Such is ever the result of an o'er true tale of passion.

The Countess of Rivington had been—nay, was—one of those rare and beautiful women who visit earth in the exact image of the beings described in Mahomet's heaven, save that her eyes were as blue as its vault, instead of the dark-eyed, ethereal houris, attending the true believers in the Koran when shuffled from their mortal coil. She was tall and stately, with limbs cast in one of nature's faultless moulds; and, what is more than a graceful person, she possessed grace in her mind and grace at her heart. Not a movement but what was elegant; not a thought but what was refined; not a word but what was well tempered in purity and captivation. Rare gifts, too, were hers. Poetry had crowned her, if not with evergreen laurel, still she had woven a wreath of flowers for her brow, and right well did the garland become it. Music loved her well, and echoed willingly to many a soft, thrilling chord when struck by her light, delicate hand. Thus beauty, grace, poetry, and music, were her attendants; and what mortal could desire more charming handmaids!

Time, perhaps, had mellowed and even plucked the freshness of her beauty; still she was a lovely woman, and will remain so, even if she become a gray ruin of beauty. Ivy clings about her; the plant of memory, constant in adversity, twines his unfading vine around the shrine, and breathes defiance to the grizzly-bearded reaper's scythe.

The Countess had been twice married; but was now free from those riveted bonds which death alone can sever,—and certain proceedings, by the way, in Doctors' Commons. She had had no anxious cares of a mother; but a daughter, by her late husband, claimed her protection as a step-child. Whether it was afforded or not, will form no present inquiry in these pages. A few brief facts, however, must be narrated. Soon after the decease of the Countess of Rivington's liege lord, the Marquis D'Horsay became the husband of his only daughter.

“Paired, but not matched,” says the old proverb. And although, if we are to credit the assertions of our grandsires,

marriages are fabricated in heaven, the manufacture of some would lead us to suppose, from the bungling, palpable, and unmitigated errors in their formation, that the handicraft must be turned from a place of mischief, instead of that garden wherein the pippins of discord never grow.

Be this, however, as it may, the match with which we have more particularly to do was no sooner kindled by the torch of Hymen than, like a damp lucifer, it refused to burn. Out it went, never to be re-kindled.

And wherefore?

Ayé, it is a far easier task to put a question than to answer it. And still as every why has its wherefore, let us endeavour to wring a reply from testimony, however reluctant in opening her records.

The Marquis D'Horsay's figure, style, taste, manners, accomplishments, birth, extreme beauty of features, and dazzling station in the *beau monde*, made him, and well they might, the universally-admired object with women, and scarcely less so of envy with men. Was it surprising, then, that one in whose veins the blood was unfrosted, who, like a moth flitting round a brilliant flame, until, overpowered with the brightness, it darts into it regardless of the dire effects—was it surprising, we repeat, that one thus placed within the circle of temptation, should sear her wings like many have done before?

Morality shakes her head. Prudence must needs blush and bury her face in her dry, bloodless palms—for Prudence is very old—and stiff-laced Decorum looks as if suddenly metamorphosed into a bag of starch. And yet, notwithstanding these signs and omens, woman—fond, warm, loving woman—will dare and brave the worst for the idol of her affection. What cares she for the cold gaze or the smiling sneer? 'Tis as a feather to the gravity of her soul!

Too well, and far from wisely, the Countess of Rivington loved the Marquis D'Horsay. Concealment was useless, and, therefore, never attempted. In public and in private, in halls and in closets, in the extended and contracted spheres of life, the subject was often mooted, generally admitted, and never contradicted. All knew, and what seems strange, all took an extraordinary interest in the indubitable admission of the state of the *affaire de cœur*. Numbers viewed it in a little more offensive

light than that of ill-judged platonic affection, and few, very few in the great mass, looked upon the attachment as an example to avoid. The Countess and her cavalier were considered to be exceptions, by that inconsistent monster, Society ; and whatever code of morality might be broken by their relative positions, still that silly, sleek-coated, dove-tongued creature, can twine and twist a cramped exception into a support to its rule, with the practised edge of a lying lawyer's tongue.

And did the Marquis return measure for measure? If he did, the stock from which he filled his metre must have been an unbounden one. There could have been no limits, or if there were they must have been of the gigantic measurement of the united pyramids of Egypt. Was he like, then, a butterfly in a conservatory? Or a bee among the tendrils of a honeysuckle? Or a black beetle in a sugar cask? Or a mouse nibbling in a warehouse of double Glo'sters? The comparisons are diversified, and yet they give but a faint idea of what the Marquis was among those who smite with tender looks, and win with smiles that gimble through the heart rapidly and securely.

With some, whose imaginations had pictured the Marquis "all their fancy painted," he was styled "a fancy man;" and if romance was ever felicitously blended with the real, this was a happy case in point. The Marquis was, in truth, the bell-wether of his order.

At an open casement, in a large and imposing mansion in the immediate vicinity of Kensington gardens, sat the Countess of Rivington. During the brief hours of darkness, for it was the very height of summer, she had remained there; and now the pale tinge of the early day streaked the east, still she continued in the same spot, a lone and anxious watcher.

Who can tell? Aye! who can tell what it is to wait for the heart's loved object, save those who have counted that lazy time? The hours creep their dull length along in barefaced mockery of impatience. They are no longer fleet-winged as the skimming swallow, but with broken pinions they flap their way; dull laggards that they are.

Blanched was that lady's cheek, and deeply marked her brow. Care, and great care, too, was in every lineament of her features. Resting on one hand, she turned a quick ear to every approaching sound, and, until it proved to be not the one desired,

her pulse throbbed at an increased rate, and her heart beat more quickly. Again and again she was doomed to disappointment.

"It used not to be thus," she said at length. "It used not to be thus;" and at the conclusion of the sentence she rose from her chair, and paced the room hurriedly.

And where was the Marquis D'Horsay, the object of her solicitude? Shall we, with the power of Asmodeus, skip o'er wall and roof, and, stripping the substantial curtain of bricks and mortar from all its inward secrets, lay them bare to the prying, peeping eyes of our companions? Yes, or how can we expose "the follies of the day," and vices of the night!

In an elegantly-furnished apartment, not far from the Italian Opera house, the Marquis had been passing "his evening," as he would call it, in the society of one of the public's first favourites in the poetry of motion. That it had been pleasant, there can be but little doubt; so pleasant, indeed, that the small hours had been well dipped into long before his attention was drawn to their sinking in grains upon the shores of time.

The remains of refreshments, tastefully served, stood upon the table, and while the Marquis lolled upon a sofa at some little distance, a lady, tall, graceful, and slender, sat close to it, in what may be called a disconsolate mood, pulling a faded bouquet to pieces—(it had been thrown on the stage amid the plaudits of a thousand hands)—and pouting her displeasure, or as an acquisition to her beauty.

"I love you, by heaven, to madness," sung the Marquis, in a subdued tone, and looking at the ceiling abstractedly, and keeping time with his crossed dexter foot; "and what can I swear to you more?"

"A ver great deal more," replied the lady in the prettiest broken English possible, "if dat is what you swear to everybody."

"But, my dear Fanny," rejoined the Marquis in a tone of expostulation, "how very wrong it is for you to accuse me of loving everybody. You know my taste is superlatively chaste, and extravagantly difficult to please. How, then, can I be that general admirer so constantly referred to by you?"

"I don't know *how*," returned the lady angrily, "and I sall care less for the future."

"Now, you're quite jealous, I see," added the Marquis,

recovering a sitting position. "But why should I complain? It heightens the tint on your cheek"—(perhaps it did; but if so, the tint perforated a very thick coat of rouge)—"brightens," continued the Marquis, "the flash in those beaming eyes, and adds lustre to that which was dazzling before."

When was flattery too sweet for a vain woman?

"How prettily you speak when a naughty boy," replied the lady, falling nine degrees in her anger. "I could almost forgive you."

"Could!" repeated the Marquis, "you mean *have* forgiven me all my peccadilloes. Is it not so, Fanny?" continued he, rising, and drawing on a glove as a signal for his departure.

"Promise me good behaviour for de time to come, then," said the lady, shaking her up-raised finger at the delinquent.

"I'll promise anything," replied the Marquis, "and will seal it with a ——" and the remainder of the sentence was broken in carrying its meaning to a practical demonstration.

"*Ma foi!*" exclaimed the lady, regaining her good humour. "De time is long, I tink, since I met with so warm a kiss."

"Nay, nay," replied the Marquis, raising his hands imploringly, "do not remind me of such remissness. Shall I wait an hour or so longer to make amends?"

"By no means," replied the favourite of Terpsichore. "I will not say dat I wish you gone," continued she, looking archly at the Marquis; "but when you are ——"

"You'll refresh those wearied and exquisite limbs by repose," interrupted he.

"Yes," rejoined the lady; "for my two *encores* tired me to de great measure."

"And yet without them," returned the Marquis, "you would have felt greater fatigue."

"*Sans doute,*" added she, "in de heart."

"Who could be barbarian enough to tire such a heart?" said the Marquis, in a gallant humour.

"*Mon Dieu!*" ejaculated the lady, lifting her elbows, shoulders, and eyebrows. "Then why do you make it ache sometime?"

"Say rather why should it ache without a cause?" replied he.

"You always succeed in de speech," she rejoined. "I will not say one word more."

"Except adieu," returned the Marquis, with an accompaniment incumbent upon him to make.

"When shall we meet again?" inquired the lady.

"Ere," said the Marquis, pulling aside the curtains hanging before the windows, and admitting freely the sunbeams, long since struggling through chink and through crevice, "ere that Bude light pretends again to equal its rival the neighbouring gas-lamp."

With this the Marquis took his departure, and in a few seconds the clatter of his horse's feet ceased to jar upon the ear, and frightened grimalkins, scared by the noise, issued again from area depths and lurking places to screech and claw for their "ladye loves."

Now, it so occurs in this jostling, sublunary, earthy stage, on which every man and cat is expected to play a part, that there are frequently many candidates for one possession. It signifies not what the nature be of the thing to be won; it is next to a certainty, that many competitors will challenge their respective merits for the palm. From a ribbon and order of the garter, to the symbol of the hangman's office—the halter—numerous are the candidates for the honour and emolument attending the empty stall and the deserted gibbet. There is never a lack.

An observant eye can scarcely fail to have remarked that a successful *danseuse*, pampered by the praise of an adulating public, has generally a train of admirers, eager as a troop of boys to cap a butterfly, seeking and hunting for her smiles and favours. And, too, it can scarcely miss to have left an impression on the said referred-to organ of vision, that these smiles and favours, when bestowed, are never considered by the donor in the light of a monopoly. Share, and if not share alike, still there must be a dispensation of the gifts to more than one of the entered favourites, and, for the most part, in accordance with the consideration bestowed for their possession.

Love is as great a merchant as Baring and Co., and deals in his wares with the same simple fundamental rules of dealing and market prices. So much for so much. Like sugar, indigo, or cochineal, the tender passion has its rises and its falls, its premiums and its discounts.

Among the fair dealers in this marketable commodity, there are some who will accept those very doubtful forms of exchanges

in the shape of promises. Not bills payable at sight, but engagements at long dates, and more than questionable of ever finding assets to meet the acceptances. Now, when the risks are large, the profits should be great ; an unquestionable axiom in all pursuits of gain. The solvent, too, must make good the deficiencies created by the insolvent.

Well ! among the “adorable Fanny’s” doubtful debtors was our hero, the Marquis. Still while he flitted in her train—after the principle of Bosky Tom’s customers—numbers of true, good, and sound “men about town” were eager, as carp for green peas, to win with gold what their wit could never have possessed. It may appear strange that this inclination should be capable of being conducted after the fashion of the electrical telegraph : but so it was ; so it is. Men are ever more ready to be guided in their opinions and tastes, of every kind, than forming either the one or the other for themselves. The weaker sex—heaven forgive the error!—are perfectly cognizant of this ; and if, like the wary hunter of wild fowl, they have their *stool duchs*, the lure is well conceived for the object of ultimate capture.

Scarcely was the last faint sound of the Marquis’s retiring wheels audible, when a light summons was given at the street door.

The lady turned her ear quickly to the sound, and smiled—not as when bending gracefully among a shower of wreaths—but as naturally as a cottage child bobbing for a cherry.

“Dat is him,” she said in a whisper, throwing herself on to an ottoman.

A footstep, nimble with expectation, skipped up the staircase ; a gentle knock, and, ere the “come in” could be given, the door flew open, and there stood—the Earl of Chesterlane.

Not many a weary mile from this scene one laid hushed in fitful slumber. It was a good and virtuous wife dreaming of her wrongs.

CHAPTER XI.

THAT ambition should be made of remarkably stern and tough material there cannot be a question. So frequent are the rebuffs met with in its slippery climb, that unless there be the consistency of glue or pitch in the gripe of him who aspires to breathe over the heads and level of his fellows, the attempt will prove not unlike that doubtful elevation of the stoic, who claimed the right of taking precedence, and being above the cold, calculating codes of this matter-of-fact, bread-and-cheese, thin, and common swipy world, by his fixed determination of invariably *overlooking* his debts. This celebrated philosopher, notwithstanding some heavy drawbacks upon solving his theory into rules of practice, had, and indeed has, many proselytes of enthusiastic temperament. They adhere with a fanatic tenacity to the primitive principles laid down for their observance, and, like other martyrs, are compelled to pass through certain ordeals and trials, for, doubtlessly, the praiseworthy purpose of testing their zeal. Among these pains and penalties may be enumerated dunning, bumming, and gazetting. These three degrees of comparison are especially familiar, and may be considered the rudiments of the novice's studies. Then follows the "seedy state" with all its varied forms and colours. Tripping nimbly on the heels of this condition may be added the o'er-ripe, over-blown "weedy stage." And then the occupation's gone.

The pure, unadulterated, unmixed spirits who are found at the head of the foremost ranks in this modern school of ethics, may be enumerated those facetious dogs whose plenitude of fear has gained for them the title of "men who live by their wits." Nothing can be more flattering; nothing more creditably meritorious. Now, these choice hewers of the way on the high road and bye lanes of life, may be found in nearly every oasis and spot, offering a crop to their ready-whetted scythes. And they cut close, too, or their chroniclers err in the most essential qualification to those destined to mow their own grass. Be this, however, as it may, in no sublunary spot 'neath which the moon's phases skim, is to be found such unblemished specimens of sharp-brained mortality as in that far-famed *locale*—"TATTERSALL'S."

If man be the noblest study to man, nowhere does such a

volume present itself for his perusal. Acutes—to use a new term, may here be discovered of every shade and texture ; not an exception to be found wanting. From the humble dealer in canine whelps, to the noble dealer in a nobler animal, from the sporting character who stakes his half-an'-half and goes of cordial with many “outs,” to him who bets his thousands, with not a jot more interest in the result, offers in numbers no ordinary collection for the observation of the curious in the affections of such bipeds.

“Lot twenty-six, a grey mare, quiet to ride and drive, and *has* carried a lady—What will any gentleman please to give for her?”

Such was the introductory remark and query of Mr Richard Tattersall, occupying the elevated position in a pulpit, from which little truth, compared with the opposite, had been promulgated since its erection ; but in no way compromising the honesty of its respective deliverers, as they acted only in accordance with their received instructions. We have heard honourable members of the bar apply this palliative as unction to their consciences with singular success. “What will any gentleman please to give for her?” repeated the auctioneer. “Fifty guineas for her. Forty. Thirty. She's to be sold. Run her down,” continued he, as not one of the motley group in the yard evinced a disposition to bid without a test of the grey mare's action and qualifications to her alleged merits.

“A good goer,” observed Mr Tattersall eulogistically, as the grey mare was compelled to do her best by dint of the free application of a loud cracking whip. “A remarkable good goer,” he repeated. If she was, the goodness was kept an especial secret ; for as she limped along in a shambling trot, three legs were visibly unsound, and the fourth presented a very doubtful tendency as to its freedom from ills to which horse-flesh is heir. “Twenty guineas for the mare. She's quiet to ride and drive, and *has* carried a lady,” resumed the auctioneer.

Still all were silent.

“Say something for her,” pleaded Mr Tattersall. “She's to be sold. Ten, five—anything.”

A nod was given.

“Five's bid,” said the auctioneer, “and then he ran the lot up to ten pounds—the reserved price—in such a quick and natural way, that one more experienced than a freshman might have





imagined, in his innocence, that every increased amount was a genuine offer. Whereas not a farthing had been advanced upon the original five pounds.

"Will any one give more?" asked Mr Tattersall, glancing at the legitimate bidder in that form which comes under the graphic description of "a sheep's eye."

The nod was repeated.

A little entreaty, a few more panegyrics on the supposed merits of the mare, and then down came the hammer with "sold" for its echo.

The purchaser looked as if he had had sufficient practice in the art and mystery of horse-dealing to avoid being let in by appearances which admit not of being described even as deceptive. For such was the number of screws loose in the machinery of the grey mare, that the most unskilful could have detected her defects.

"I'm a knowing card," was openly declared in the slang, turned-up hat shading his chubby cheeks and chubby nose, pleasantly adorned with stationary pimples. "I'm a slap-up kiddy," was advertised in the blue and white spotted kerchief twisted round his neck. "I'm a downy cove," was portrayed in his Newmarket cutaway coat and long, very long waistcoat. Even his straight legs, incased in tight-fitting cords, announced broadly, "we're inexpressibles of no ordinary stuff."

"I thought I couldn't be mistaken," observed Bosky Tom, edging his way through the crowd towards the buyer of the animal mentioned as having carried a lady; "I thought I couldn't be mistaken," repeated he. "It's Knowing Harry, by all that's simple." Obtaining a path to the elbow of the gentleman described as Knowing Harry, his attention was quickly attracted from an opposite quarter by Bosky Tom's planting a familiar and hearty thwack between his shoulders.

"Well, Emperor!" exclaimed Bosky Tom, "what's the luck?" The party thus regally addressed regarded the inquirer in such a state of mingled surprise and doubt, that the expression upon his features amounted to something akin to solemnity. Slowly he turned his eyes from the extreme tips of Bosky Tom's patent leather boots until they rested on the velvet knap of his glossy beaver. So measured, indeed, was the look, that it was all-sufficient to awake impatience in a hot temperament with its sluggishness.

"I've seen a few come-over-me ups and downs," replied simple

Harry, fixing, at length, his wandering eyes upon a colossal ruby pin in the strikingly attractive scarf emerging from Bosky Tom's bosom, like the inflated crop of a fancy pouter. "But take a suck at the lemon and at him agin," exclaimed he enthusiastically ; "if this *doesn't* beat cockfighting !"

"You'd scarcely know me," added Bosky Tom, making a dive for the points of his shirt collar, and bringing them to view with a movement indicating a perfect satisfaction with the anticipated reply.

"I knew a oss," returned Knowing Harry deliberately, and by way of a parable, "that could walk a little, trot a few, and as for jumping ! d—n my eyes. But," continued he admiringly, "you beat *him* in all his paces."

"Ah !" ejaculated Bosky Tom, stretching his legs apart, "I was always a climbing boy."

"Don't try a certain kind of stairs again though," rejoined Knowing Harry with a wink.

"No, no, no," returned his companion, extracting a gold watch from his waistcoat pocket, and glancing at the dial, "there's no danger of that. But what are you doing ?"

"The old business," shortly replied Knowing Harry.

"Horse-chaunting, eh ?" returned his friend.

"Not exactly," replied Harry, "although it's but an improvement on that trick."

"I thought there must be a fresh kite in the wind," rejoined Bosky Tom. "What is it ?"

"We come the advertising trade now," returned Knowing Harry, "and until well blown we shall cut it fat. But," continued he with a sigh, "not so soft and oily as you, after all."

"Put us up to the wrinkle," added his companion. "You know that I shall neither peach nor work the oracle to my own gain."

"Nothing can be more artless to be called an artful dodge," observed Knowing Harry, tapping his dexter knee with a short riding whip. "You saw me buy a grey oss just now ?"

"I did," replied his companion, "and a precious screw she is."

"Not a more precious one in London," rejoined Knowing Harry enthusiastically. "She's the best screw that ever passed through my hands, and this will be the fourth time she's gone through 'em. I call her," continued he, "the annuity mare, and a safer investment man never had. She's as good as a government pension."

"But how do you work her at such a profit?" inquired Bosky Tom.

"I was about telling ye," replied his friend. "By tender nursing we can get that mare to go sound, on the soft, within a fortnight. That done, I advertise her as the 'favourite nag of a deceased gentleman, a kind and considerate owner being required, price being a second consideration.' A black livery that I keep on purpose helps the business amazingly. The bait swallowed, a flat calls to view the property of the late owner no longer able to mount pig's-skin, and there he sees, and has the pleasure of talking to, a nice, respectable-looking man servant, who lived God knows how many years with the dead and gone, and lets him know that a better master couldn't be, nor a better oss to carry him."

"I see," remarked Bosky Tom.

"Yes," returned Knowing Harry, "it doesn't require very strong spectacles. A trial's always allowed upon depositing the money," continued he, "with an understanding that it's to be returned if so be the tit doesn't suit. And so difficult are most people to please, that I never knew a single instance when the rowdy was not wanted back again."

"But—" said his friend.

"It was always Walker," concluded Knowing Harry. "The worthy flunky had been called suddenly into the country, and forgotten to leave his address."

"It's an independent livelihood," observed Bosky Tom. "A nice, quiet, sociable way of getting one's daily whack of vittles."

"It's not amiss," returned Knowing Harry, "and when one gets hold of a good screw like the grey, returns is quick. Within a few days she's sure to be put up here, and then we get her at cat's-meat price, and ring the changes upon her stables to the same old tune, with trifling variations."

"Ah!" sighed Bosky Tom. "If I should ever be reduced to a small capital, I'll invest it in a promising screw, and oil her as you do."

Quitting the presence of his friend, Bosky Tom turned his footsteps from the yard and entered the subscription room.

If there be an assembly of a more mingled order in this world than another, it is the one encircled within the walls of "the betting room at Tatt's." Here may be seen the high and the low,

the rich and the poor ; the credited and the creditless. Here may be seen those who have risen from the very ashes and dust of obscurity and pauperism, to be men of substance in the state. Here may be seen those who have climbed, and those who have formed the steps withal. Jostling and elbowing—"hail fellow, well met"—are dukes, jockies, lords and touts, legs, black-legs, prizefighters, hellites, Jews, and every denomination described or neglected to be under the title of "men who live by their wits."

That quietly-dressed, tall, and gentlemanly person is the pioneer of improvements in the laws of the turf. Lord George Bedtick is a right honourable man, and regards honesty as the leading policy even in matters relating to the course. He is the best starter of a large field that can be found in a year's search, and is held in especial reverence by the knights of the silk and snaffle, who occasionally find, to their cost, tricks must be paid for.

Although not of a silky exterior, that tall and powerful frame, containing well-knit thews and sinews, is a gentleman. He loves a race with all his heart, and is the most successful two-year-old runner in the sporting world. Colonel Reel knows, too, how to make a match, and if it does not always come off in accordance with his anticipations, still, upon the whole, a heavy balance will be found in their favour upon the accounts being audited.

There is a gallant captain, and Conservative member for a right Radical borough. He wears no very amiable expression of countenance, and yet, mayhap, it belies his disposition ; for his friends are numerous, and his foes are scant.

"A thousand to forty against Nonsense," halloos a somewhat dry and husky voice.

It is a bold bet, Mr Harry Dale. We remember you a little slip-shod Yorkshire lad, employed in polishing the coats of horses and other duties belonging to a stable boy. And now you drive your own turn out, and bank your thousands. Oh, the good savoury pies that you have had a finger in, Harry Dale ! The reflection causes one's mouth to water. The pre-decided certainties with which you have had to deal, and not even the shadow of a risk, are enough to drive men mad with envy. There was among those glorious pickings the Liverpool steeple chase, when Lottery could scarcely be prevented from winning in spite of the scientific jockeyship of his rider, and other equally safe sources for the increase of capital. Thrift, thrift, Harry Dale, has been thy motto,

and if there have been deep under-currents for the gaining of it, still success has topped your efforts, and there is some merit in the consummation, no matter how obtained.

Viscount Nedstone, beware! remember the pinions with which you fly are as yet belonging to a fledgeling. Venture not like a wanton boy, out of your depth, in a sea of troubles. Let your razors be stropped for years to come, ere you submit yourself to the tender mercies of those who live by stripping live geese of their feathers.

The smartly-attired, pale-faced gentleman, with a badly-constructed wig, is an offshoot of the great legal functionary in the High Court of Chancery. His affectionate parent professes to make him an allowance for his maintenance; but the payment is so constantly delayed, that for the last twenty years it is a question whether the collective amount would defray the cost of his white kid gloves and blacking. And yet he lives, and lives well. God save the everlasting bank of wit's ways and means!

That somewhat short, busy-bee-looking individual is a whole-sale speculator. Smallerex, by name, stands almost at the head of the alphabet, and stakes hats full of money with the same *sang froid* that he drinks soda water.

There is not a safer game on the cards than getting sufficient money against a horse to be able to afford to buy him at a commanding price. The purchaser can then—acting under the stereotyped rule of doing what one likes with one's own—make ends meet in a most agreeable way, without causing any discomposure of the nerves. The nag can be drawn, hounded, rendered amiss, or his throat cut, and yet the delectable owner may net the balanced profits of his scheme.

Ha, ha! Who would run a horse to win?

Such, once upon a time, was the self-interrogatory of that distinguished member of the betting fraternity. Mr Revel had a glimmering conception that a certain horse bearing a transatlantic name was a shade better than he anticipated, and so to get rid of all nervous forebodings he took him under his own fostering care. *That* horse never came to the post, and died soon afterwards.

Ha, ha! Who would run a horse to win?

But truth is a libel, and those who tell it oftentimes get well punished for their simplicity. To this may be added, "It sarves 'em right," and so thought Mr Revel.

There is a good man with the spice of the Jew, and there an Irish O'Something shouldering a cannie Scot. And such a confusion reigns of tongues and noises, out-babelling Babel, that we e'en seek repose by dropping our pallet and pencil on a subject not a tithe complete.

CHAPTER XII.

SUMMER ! no, there is nothing like the summer. It is nature's holiday. Not the dullest thing that creeps but feels all life's astir—younge, glad, buoyant life. Pleasure's decked in her Sunday bib and tucker, and trips o'er moor and mead right merrily. Come, thou jaundiced eye, cramped, and crooked grumbler, stewed mid bricks and mortar—thou town-bred, begrimed, and smoky sparrow ; thou kennel cock, bereft even of a dunghill whereon to throw thy matin challenge to the breeze ; thou bilious, consumptive tulip in attic window high—come, come with us, and we will lift thy lazy blood.

There, beneath this old chestnut tree let us rest.

“Ha, ha, ha !”

“Why did you laugh ?”

“'Fore God, because we must !”

Wherefore does that leaf flap and rustle in the breeze ?—the wanton, rakish breeze who toys with all charms on his way. Why does that mounting lark, now a speck in the clear blue firmament, carol his trilling notes heavenward with his heart in his song ? Wherefore is it that the cricket chirps from yon hawthorn bush ? The laden bee, too, is humming to his thrifty store. The cowslip pale, the rose, and daffodil has he been rifling. A right busy robber is he, I wot. When the morning dew glistens in lily bells, violet cups, and secret depths of the blossoming honeysuckle, there he is, sipping and gathering in the early light, and when the shades of evening thicken, still he seems yet unwearied with the task foredone. If there be a wherefore for every why, say how is it that those web-limbed insects, now things of air, and fresh from the slimy pool, a very nursery for gnats and tittlebats, are whirling and dancing in a phalanx of giddy vagaries ? See how they rise and fall ; now in, now out, now mounting higher and higher, and—yes, that was the stoop of a quaint-winged bat that drove them to earth





again and its sheltering darkness. How they are scattered, and yet they buzz on with unimpaired glee and measure.

Why do we laugh?

Ask the nightingale the reason of her singing to the otherwise dull and empty night. Ask the sluggish, drowsy beetle how is it that he whirrs from his ivy clump, and drums his heavy wing in the silent hour, when the toad croaks loudest to his mate.

Why do we laugh?

Ask the butterfly—but that puts us in mind of our digression.

“It’s a butterfly turn out, all gingerbread and precious little ginger,” remarked one of a crowd of coachmen and their subordinate dependents, surrounding that queen of drags, the once fast Taglioni, as it stood before the entrance of the Gloucester hotel in Piccadilly, preparatory to starting on its first journey to Windsor. “All gingerbread and precious little ginger,” repeated he.

In this figurative description of a negative fault, resulting from sheer envy, we can in no way concur. For the eclipse to stage coaches of every shape, shade, and colour this said Taglioni certainly was. Neither money nor credit had been spared to render it perfection’s model. What the ready could not handily procure, I O U’s were freely applied to make good the deficiency. The teams were matchless in equality of make, pace, and spirit. The harness was dazzling, with silver figures of the fair *danseuse* from whom its title had been taken, and there she was, blazoned on the panels, in form so trippingly, and winged withal, that “to fly” seemed part and parcel of the whole. Nothing in the shape of that—now alas!—faded and gone gem of the road, a stage coach, ever came near the Taglioni. “Fast, very fast,” was as legibly stamped in blinker, crupper, buckle, and boot, as in the rattling bearing of each member of the merry crowd now scrambling and climbing to the roof.

Egad, it was enough to make young hearts flutter! and old ones, too.

“Let them go,” said the Earl of Chesterlane, springing into the box.

It was well that the leather was new and strong, or trace and rein must have snapped like packthread. Moved with one impulse, the four high-mettled horses sprung forwards with the will of untrapped pigeons. Hold them hard, my lord, or, like that ambitious whip, the driver of the chariot of the sun, you will have an

awful spill. Bur-r-r ! the stones bleed beneath the clanking hoofs and whirling wheels. Now the high road is gained. Give them their heads. On, on they sweep. Clouds of dust rise to mark their way, and ere it falls again not even a sound is left of the course or the whereabouts.

"The sensation's pleasant, very pleasant," remarked the Marquis D'Horsay, occupying the box-seat with the noble coachman. "I was always partial to velocity of movement."

"In everything but smoking," replied Lord Chesterlane, flanking the leaders into a spinning gallop—"in everything but smoking," repeated he, "a man's not fit to live who doesn't love a flying pace."

"A splendid conception," added a voice in the immediate rear of the driver. "In all things save using up a cigar; such has been my maxim through life. That is to say," continued he, "after gaining,—the eventful epoch in a man's career,—my majority."

"Of course," returned Lord Chesterlane, slightly turning his head to the speaker, "no one dates his life except from the hour he touches the rhino. And few, I imagine, remember that relishing, palatable time with more superlative zest than you, George Pang."

"It certainly proves to be one of the pleasures of memory," replied the party addressed; "and I wish, most especially, that the time present was a period in which the feeling could be engendered without retracing so many voids and gaps."

"Ha, ha ! What, you feel the chill from the moulted feathers ?" rejoined the Marquis.

"There's at least something in its approach to the difficulty of raising the down," returned George Pang in the interim between exhaling a volume of smoke and drawing one from the burning weed between his thumb and finger.

"Experience is a damper to the most careless of heart, George," added the Earl of Chesterlane. "And I dare say you'd hesitate now to scatter those hands-full of money to the scrambling crowd, as you did on the natal day empowering ye to begin the fling ?"

"Perhaps I should," replied George, "but the reflection is so devoid of all utility that you must pardon my entertaining it sufficiently long to be capable of giving a decided answer. A

smoked cigar," continued he, taking a last puff from his consumed havannah, "should never occupy any one's attention."

"I not only admire that sentiment," rejoined the Marquis D'Horsay, "but most cordially bestow upon it my endorsement. Epicureans—men of taste—live for the present, and are as indifferent to the sipped pleasures of the past as they're careless of the store of futurity."

"By beauty's dazzling eyelash!" exclaimed the Earl. "By Psyche's blush as she stood on heaven's threshold! how prosy we get;" and as he concluded the sentence he urged the horses to an increased speed.

On the coach rolled. Shoeless urchins scampered after it and hallooed themselves hoarse. Old men rested on their staffs, and with dull, bleared, and blinking eyes stood gazing at the heart-inspiring scene until they, too, felt disposed to add to the din and cheer. Young children, in their nurses' arms, stretched forth their hands and screamed with delight, and, when all had passed, turned with wondering looks and pursed lips to those who held them.

Five miles of the second stage had been rattled over when the stretched figure of a man, lying upon his face across the road, arrested the attention of the noble coachman and the progress of the carriage at nearly one and the same moment.

"Now then, you Grecian!" cried he, bringing the blown and heated horses suddenly upon their haunches. "Are ye dead?"

"Drunk," quickly replied a voice. "I'm dead drunk, I give you the honour of a gentleman."

"Why, it's Jerry!" exclaimed the Earl, as a liveried servant, who had been ravishing many an ear with the merry note of his bugle, descended from his seat behind and gently turned the countenance of the self-accused to view with the toe of his topboot. And there was that familiar face—those features whereon we have so often looked with admiration, amounting to almost fondness! Inimitable Jerry! prince of vagabonds!—can we call to memory a meeting, worthy to be called a race, where thy rascally, unmistakable, roguish visage was not to be seen? Not one; no, not one. There you always were, in cocked hat and jaunty air, levying contributions upon the public with the counterfeit semblance of a man of fashion, and little less right, withal, than many an original from whom you drew so faithful a copy.

Great, sublimated Jerry ! how often has your purse been left at home, in the hurry of departure, that you might borrow—for mind, Jerry never begged—of your friends and acquaintance. Like numbers who quarter on the mass, Jerry knew full well the case of obtaining money under false pretences, and was never known to use any other than these popular appliances.

“ How came you there, Jerry ? ” inquired the Earl.

“ I’ve been dining, my lord,” replied Jerry, staggering to his shoeless feet and recognizing his patrons on the coach, after some strenuous efforts to retain his perpendicular ; “ I’ve been dining, my lord,” he repeated, with a sound which bore close affinity to a hiccup, “ with my uncle the Archbishop. But he’s a seedy tyke, unworthy of *my* society.”

“ How so ? ” inquired the Marquis.

“ He hasn’t a soul above unions,” replied Jerry. “ And the worst of it is,” continued he, “ unions rebel against the economy of my system. Could your lordship conveniently oblige me with the loan of a couple of half-crowns to correct the mistake created in my afflicted abdomidal regions ? ”

“ Where does your uncle the Archbishop live ? ” asked the Earl, flinging the required sum into the extended and dexterous fingers of the applicant.

“ His present residence, my lord,” replied Jerry, doing his best to speak plain, “ is at the bottom of that lane, where I just left him, profitably and industriously employed.”

“ Curing souls ? ” inquired the Marquis.

“ No,” returned Jerry ; “ tinkering kettles.”

“ Is it from his peculiar avocation that he derives his title ? ” said the Earl, laughing.

“ Yes, my lord,” replied Jerry, looking more than ordinarily wise. “ That’s the tap from which he draws his Yorkshire stingo. And although,” continued he, “ there may be a distinction between filling up a crack in a frying-pan or saucepan, and stopping a leak in a man’s immortal distillation or spirit, I’ve often thought the difference very slight.”

“ Theology seems to be among his abstruse studies,” observed the Marquis.

“ The term is not quite within the compass of my comprehension,” rejoined Jerry. “ But if the study in the smallest degree approaches the circumvention of endeavouring to live

without exertion, and remarkably well, it must have formed one of my departments of knowledge."

"Enough, enough!" exclaimed the Earl, and, loosening the tightened reins, the horses plunged forwards and sped with feverish haste towards the good old town of Windsor.

CHAPTER XIII.

It may appear, at first sight, incongruous to declare that some men cannot afford to walk; but the consistency no longer assumes a questionable shape upon the inquirer's dispensing with the attic honey upon the outside coat and mackintosh of the flower, and diving his bill of curiosity into the secret recesses and depths of the fox-glove. There will be found the essence of facts condensed in the patent boiler of truth; and to gainsay them would argue the denier to be a filtered, unadulterated animal, unqualified even to envy the jackass his redundancy of ear. However, let the evidence of the inquiry be its own prop.

Our hero, the Marquis, was one of that order of men who could not afford to walk. Let not an unsophisticated member of the Lincoln-green society—one of those unripe pippins incapable of assuming a different hue to grass in early spring—imagine that he was completely out of boots or out of the elbows. No such thing. The stock on hand was too large to admit of the probability of such an undesirable consummation of adverse events, and then, again, if patience was exhausted in one quarter, so long as appearances could be maintained, there was every facility of giving "a turn" to another. Oh, yes! such was the popularity of the Marquis among the fashionable suppliers of necessities and superfluities that, until the vein of their generosity had been kept open too long and the bleeding procrastinated to weakness, there were always numbers to be found ready to furnish their ledgers with a long list of figures, resolving themselves into those accounts so frequently referred to in the Courts of Bankruptcy and Insolvency—bad debts. The Marquis was by means spun so fine, and yet he could not afford to walk. Speculations of gout, rheumatism, lumbago, corns, or chilblains may possibly flicker in the minds of the guessing and impatient of anticipating a cause. But it was none of these.

A soft, sleek-skinned, wary mouse was invited, in those good old times when animals gave tea-parties, to lap a dish of bohea with a brindled grimalkin.

"Excuse me," replied the mouse, peeping from his snug retreat. "A pen'orth of safety's worth a pound of danger, and I can't afford to speculate."

With this careful axiom of the mouse our hero fully assented, and, entertaining visions of danger in being pounced upon in leisurely strolls by the various and numerable enemies to a gentleman in difficulties, he wisely resolved to trust to the fleet legs of his dainty stepping-horse, when taking the air, rather than to his own. In short, the Marquis could not, consistently, run the risk of doing violence to his feelings of self-preservation.

Now it so happened upon one eventful morning—after an elaborate survey, performed by his faithful valet, of each nook, corner, post, doorway, and cranny in the vicinity that might chance to hold a reptile of the law or loquacious dun—the Marquis issued from the screened walls of his new residence, near Hyde Park, in his cabriolet. It may be recorded here that this *locale* was admirably chosen for eluding the ferreting senses of those who seem never weary in hunting a debtor to earth. High and strong gates, locks, bars, bolts, private and concealed doors were felicitously placed for security and escape, and the same precautions taken for guarding against surprise and assault as in those days when men buckled harness to their backs and wore swords as unexceptionably as wasps wear stings.

There might be a nervous twitter through the frame of the Marquis as he threw sideway glances here and there in his progress, and if an innocent individual or two—as far from designing aught against his liberty as heaven is from fraud—were momentarily mistaken for representatives of the worthy Sheriff of Middlesex, still—as the pickpocket fears each lamp-post a policeman—the feeling was far from being either uncommon or an unnatural one.

It being quite impossible that the Marquis could move without drawing the observation of everybody—from the man in the monument, and perhaps in the moon, down to an humble merchant in periwinkles—it is a matter of no wonder that he should prove a source of attraction on this occasion. The eyes of Knightsbridge were upon him; still not one viewed him ini-

mically. Argus-visioned Hyde Park corner then came into play; still he was free. Well had it been for him had he not attempted Piccadilly! There was the mistake.

We have often heard old grandames say, that there is nothing like having a personal interest in an undertaking, and to perform it oneself in order to ensure success. This trite observation never was more ably supported, and its truth illustrated, than in the person of Mr Sloughman, as he crouched behind a line of cabs on the stand, waiting for the approach of the Marquis, after the fashion of a panther, in her lair for the coming of an unsuspecting kid. Figuratively speaking, the very tail of his coat was beyond control with exultation. And, perchance, Mr Sloughman had sufficient cause to feel thus moved, for in his own Israelitish person he combined the two deepest concerned characters in a doubtful loan—the creditor and bum. The creation of this influence may be briefly related. Mr Sloughman, for an homœopathic consideration, became the possessor of the Marquis's autograph across a certain piece of paper with a comprehensive stamp upon it. In good time, as the document clearly expressed, this should have been exchanged for the circulating medium of a more genuine description, in shape of the standard coin of the realm. However, promises neither written nor verbal are kept with that punctuality which the holders of them, in whose favour they are made, so generally and flatteringly lead themselves to expect. Mr Sloughman's hopes were doomed to disappointment. The note—like the aerial machine—fell flat as a flounder at the moment of its maturity, and then it was that the dread officer of the law, whose executions exceeded those of Jack Ketch by many a score, turned his attention to seeking his remedy. And here we find him in the very act of putting it in force.

"You're an artful dodger," muttered Mr Sloughman between his teeth, "and have given me a considerable deal of trouble; but I'll go in now and win."

"Shall I try to stop the oss by throwing my at at is ed?" inquired a junior bum, in his noviciate condition of attendant upon Mr Sloughman.

"It mayn't be a bad move," replied his superior, "particularly as he's coming along by no means slow."

At this moment the horse was picking his road with the fastidious tread of a French dancing-master in pumps, just opposite

the place of concealment, when the hat was whirled with effective aim at his head. Like a sail blown from the bolt-rope he flew aside, and then dashed forward half frenzied with fear. The hand of Mr Sloughman clutched at the rein, and nearly succeeded in grasping it; but the fates were averse to the catch, and it failed in its object.

Our hero perceived the danger, and essayed to meet it with the nerve of one prepared for emergencies. No whip was needed, and yet he applied it with quick and stinging severity. The thong cracked round the flank of the punished animal, and, ere it had been repeated, he was tearing along at speed in his endeavours to distance the bum. But a bum—that is, an experienced bum—is not an easy impediment to get rid of. The rein escaped Mr Sloughman's out-stretched hands, it is true; but like that celebrated sportsman who "heard the cock neigh," if he missed the tit he hit the barn. Clawing with the tenacity of a cat to an apple-tree, Mr Sloughman fixed his hold upon one of the C springs behind the cabriolet, and jumping on to the step, resolved to adhere to his post with the determination of grim death to a broom-stick. But like other exalted men, Mr Sloughman soon discovered his position to be no sinecure. Intuitively the tiger became cognizant of the desperate condition of affairs. Looking down, with rising blood, at the interloper upon his privileged one-foot square in the rear, and deeming him neither useful nor ornamental, he commenced an attack, not far from resembling the gallant Tom Thumb's, upon the Ogre. With might and main he sent his miniature top-boots against the *os frontis* of the enemy. The diversion was a happy one and well conceived, and baffled the foe immensely; but the weapons were too much in want of powder to effect a dislodgement.

Thoughts, rapid as the mad career of the horse, flashed through the brain of the Marquis. At one moment he resolved to point, like a hard-pressed fox, to the nearest refuge. Crockford's, White's, Boodle's, were all at hand; and although all presented attractive intricacies for a secure retreat, still each possessed some glaring objection. At length, ignorant of Mr Sloughman's riding like some hideous nightmare on the back of the cab, he reined in his horse, and, skilfully avoiding all impediments in his way, turned him sharply down Bond street with the view of distancing his pursuer.

The applauding shouts, however, of "Go it, little un," soon discovered the fallacy of the design. The Marquis glanced through the window immediately behind him, and saw, like Napoleon through a glass, the overthrow of his force. Unhappy tiger—pitiable cub! With an approach to patience the persevering bum had received the kicks so industriously bestowed upon him from Piccadilly to Bond street. But there must be an end to all sublunary inflictions, even the trespasses upon patience, and therefore Mr Sloughman's decision not to sit to be kicked any longer, as he arrived abreast of Akinson's bear's-grease mart, will form no matter of astonishment.

"I tell you what it is, my pink," said he to his youthful tormentor, "if you don't keep your spindle-stumps quiet I'll send ye flying off that board."

The warning was unheeded. Tiger redoubled his pigmy efforts, and hammered away like a Briton that he was in embryo.

"Very good!" added Mr Sloughman; "then here goes," and seizing both the assaulting legs in one hand he jerked them suddenly from their *locus standi*, and flung the tiger scudding in the air like an oyster-shell, and with little less ease than a buzzing fly would be picked from out of his ear. "There you go," observed Mr Sloughman, as his victim whirled between earth and sky; adding, as he obeyed the laws of gravity by alighting on the flat of his back across a scraper some thirty yards off, "I trust slightly damaged."

It was as this grain of time sunk on the shore of eternity that the Marquis became acquainted with the stern reality of his lamentable position. He was like one endeavouring to flee from his own shadow, and as hopeless of success. However long the race, however great the distance, no difference could be effected in their relative places.

Through the gay throng, up this street, down that, now so sharp round the corners that the peripatetic fruiterers screwed up their faces as if their corns had been grazed, then for the East, now for the West, did the Marquis spin in a chaos of uncertainty and confusion. He knew not what to do, or what course to take. For there, like a great wen or corneous excrescence, did the proselyte of Moses—that over-grown bum—stick, careless of the where he was taken, or the when it might chance to happen. Indeed, he was now quite at his ease, and portrayed the satis-

faction he entertained by crossing his arms and sitting on the foot-board like a gentleman in the enjoyment of his leisure.

"I must nab ye at last," soliloquized Mr Sloughman, "so drive to heaven if you're in the mind."

To greatly add to our hero's distress and anguish, and as if some quick-moving telegraph was in full play, crowds of particular friends and acquaintances seemed to have a fore-knowledge of what would occur, and the precise spots where the best view could be obtained. For turn, twist, twine as he did, there was always a somebody in the way who the Marquis religiously wished had been blind, instead of a spectator.

'Tis invariably so. Our friends are ever in the way when most especially desired to be out of it; and, by the same rule of contradiction, are never to be found when as particularly required to be in it. Should this maxim meet the eye of a gentleman having been in want of bail, the reflection upon that event will prove a singularly concise and conclusive demonstration of it.

"Desperate diseases demand desperate remedies," said the Marquis in confidence to himself; and—after a pause to measure the distance between two carriages and a wheelbarrow, in order to avoid a stoppage *in transitu*—he added, like one resolved, "I must amputate this bum."

It was a bold design, and one worthy of a hero. Scarcely was the thought engendered before it was reduced to practice. At some short distance the Marquis espied a stubborn, surly-looking post, smoked and rusted in the wear and tear of many a winter. Generations had played leap-frog over that old post, and yet there he stood, in open defiance of rub and friction of every kind. Did he shiver or shake when coal-waggons and brewers'-drays disputed his right of tenure? Not he. The grim old fellow disdained their impotent attacks, and as for vehicles of a lighter kind, he cracked them as "a monkey would a fan, or any other gentleman."

And so the Marquis correctly imagined. With a nice eye, alive to every proffered advantage, he guided his horse towards this sturdy defier of rubs, and with the same cautious, steady look that a player at billiards bestows when about making a stroke of importance, or a rifleman when he levels his piece, took aim at the post with the centre of the wheel. Like certain late speculations in the linendrapery trade, the crash was awful.

For a moment—for one brief second—the Marquis was in doubt whether a greater injury had not been effected than he for the nonce contemplated or desired. The staggered horse fell upon his haunches; then scrambling forwards, with uncertain foothold, pitched upon his head. That was a bold effort. Up, up. Now once more, and there he is spanking away as if neither his knees were broken or the wheel and axle sadly damaged.

And where was Mr Sloughman all this while? We have, indeed, lost sight of him, and well we may, since he flew from his seat with the velocity of a whistling bullet, and, after performing sundry evolutions and summersets that might have put many a harlequin to the blush, became completely lost to view in the yawning abyss of a neighbouring area. The Marquis caught a glimpse of the extreme end of the skirt of his coat in his descent, and then, these last remains fading from his view, a glow of triumph spread itself upon the handsome face of our hero as he directed his horse in security towards Kensington.

CHAPTER XIV.

“AND so they say that I must die, and that, too, quickly,” observed one who we have had a glimpse of before, and but a glimpse—the Marquis of Hereford. Poor old man! What, pity *him*! the debauched sensualist, the heartless *roué*, the gamester—he who never evinced a latent spark of virtue among his glaring vices, revelling in crime even in his impotent age and dotage—what, pity him! Ay, we will pity him, gentle reader, for he is dead.

“And so they say that I must die, and that, too, quickly,” repeated he. “Well, well! then I’ll make the best use of the time left.”

Although it was the middle of summer, the Marquis was reclining on a sofa drawn before a large fire, and his legs were wrapped in blankets and shawls, and, but that he rolled his watery eyes round the walls of the luxuriously-furnished apartment as if in restless, nervous thought, and dropped a few words occasionally, he might be taken for an Egyptian mummy, or something that had been long since buried from mortal eyes. With barely sufficient flesh to cover his sharp, protruding bones,

and that so yellow and dry that not a drop of blood seemed to be circulating in his veins, he looked as if the current of his life was spent. Old, decrepit, worn to the dregs, diseased, and yet vicious ! Such was the Marquis of Hereford when told that he was within the last coil of his mortal span.

His strength was barely sufficient to stretch forth a hand to reach a bell-rope, not six inches from his fingers, and yet the summons was for—but that shall speak for itself.

"Swiss," said his lordship, as his valet and confidant of all his bosom secrets entered the room, "they have just told me that I must soon die."

The valet—a showily-dressed man, with features bearing a striking resemblance to those of a fox—feigned, in a truly natural manner, a start of horror and astonishment. For a short time he was silent in the endeavour to rummage his brain for a pious exclamation ; but not finding one with the readiness that the occasion demanded, he abandoned the attempt, and, with a clasp of the hands, which produced a highly dramatic effect, exclaimed, "Oh, say not so, my lord."

"I feel the words are true," rejoined his master, "and therefore *will* say so."

"What can—what shall I do !" ejaculated the valet, with well-assumed agony and devotion.

"Prepare one more of those feasts," replied his lordship, in a whisper, "that I love so well. And as it is probable I shall never have another, let your cunning thought devise the choicest plans to suit my taste."

"I will, my lord," replied the faithful servant, trying to raise a tear ; but either the pump was dry or frozen, for nothing like one could be drawn from the spring. "I will, my lord," repeated he. "Shall Matilde, Henriette, Madeline, Marguerite, or Clementine, be the fortunate and flattered object of your lordship's adoration ?"

"Matilde and Madeline are the two wildest," replied his master, feebly chafing his withered hands and chuckling with glee. "We'll have both of them, Swiss ; we'll have both of them."

"Yes, my lord," rejoined the valet. "And where will your lordship have the preparations made ?"

"I care not where," returned the Marquis, "only let them be made quickly."

“To-day, if it suits your lordship.”

“Ay, let them be to-day, Swiss; for I fear my morrows are very few.”

“I’ll hasten and obey your lordship’s desires at once,” added the complying panderer, hurrying from the presence of his employer.

To the letter was the promise kept. In a short hour a carriage was rolling on the high road to Richmond, containing two splendidly, although perhaps over-dressed French women, the Marquis; and his valet. As if the exertion of this easy travelling was even more than his attenuated frame could bear, the Marquis dropped his chin upon his breast, and with closed eyes and compressed lips lolled silently in a corner of the carriage, despite the raillery and wit of his companions.

“He vill come to hisself in ver lectle time,” remarked one of the fair and frail.

“Yes, yes,” returned the other, stooping forward and imprinting a salute upon the cheek of the Marquis; but as she did so there was an expression upon her lip as though it had come in contact with something putrid.

“Let his lordship remain quiet and undisturbed,” remarked the valet. “His strength will soon be recruited.”

“I cannot permeet him to be so quiet,” returned the first speaker. “He should be gay with us.”

“And he vill be so,” added the other, “or he is not the gallant that I believe.”

“Be patient, Madeline,” observed the Marquis, faintly. “I shall be better presently.”

“We are within a short distance of the hotel now, my lord,” said the valet.

“That’s well,” returned his lordship, feebly; “for I’m in much pain.”

“Speak not of pain, *mi lor*,” added Madeline, gaily. “We have come for pleasure.”

“True enough, true enough,” replied the Marquis, with an effort, “and we’ll not be disappointed in meeting with her.”

“I’ve done my best to guard against disappointment, my lord,” rejoined the attendant, “and trust my poor efforts will meet with approbation.”

“No doubt they will, Swiss; no doubt they will,” returned

his master. "I have ever reason to be satisfied with your services and arrangements for my gratification."

At this moment the carriage stopped at the entrance of the Tower hotel in the far-famed town of Richmond. With some difficulty the Marquis was lifted from his seat and carried by his valet into the apartment prepared for his reception, followed by Matilde and Madeline, and a throng of bowing, adulating waiters.

The sun had not set yet, and although he was casting his longest shadows upon the ground and tipping the tree-top with his sinking rays, still there was no shade of evening darkening the landscape, neither did the mist rise curling from the stream. Then why was the cheerful light of day so carefully excluded from that room? Why were the thick hangings drawn before the casements, so that not a ray might steal through crack or crevice to mock the consumptive glare of flaming lamps? It was well that the arrangement was so complete; for the babbling day is no witness for such a scene as was to be enacted there.

Appetite he had none. Satiated and sick, the Marquis saw the most costly viands spread before him, and yet cared to touch none of them. But he could drink, and drink deeply, too. Often did he raise his brimming glass with trembling fingers to his lips, and, nodding like one palsied to his lady friends, pledge them in oft-repeated draughts until his dull, fishy, and bleared eyes sparkled again. His attendant, Swiss, stood behind his chair, and, as soon as his glass was drained, replenished it with a ready hand. Renewed vigour and fresh life seemed to take possession of the Marquis, and instead of the exhaustion and inanition with which he appeared to be suffering heretofore, he was now full of mirth, and joined in the jest and the laugh with a spirit that could scarcely be imagined possible to be kindled within him. However, wine and women still retained their charms with the Marquis, and although his taste had been cloyed long since by every other kind of pleasure, these, as yet, had not failed to fan the smouldering embers of his passions.

"All is as I could wish," said his lordship, looking at his companions with the eye of one accustomed to gloat upon beauty as a mere incentive to desire. "I love such hours as these, eh, Swiss?"

"It's a joy to me, my lord, to hear such——"

“Faugh, faugh!” interrupted his master. “No flattery, no flattery.”

“If we spoke de truth,” observed Madeline, “you might tink dat we flatter.”

“It would depend upon the object to be attained by the statement, my love,” replied the Marquis. “A compliment is next to worthless unless it bears a semblance of truth, and truth is often the greatest of flatterers.”

“It does sound like music to hear him speak,” said Matilde, raising her glass and peeping at the valet with a gesture which showed the perfect understanding existing between them.

Swiss returned the telegraphic communication by screwing up his lips and winking his left eye.

The evening advanced, and as it did so the mirth of the party increased. The joke, the jest, the ribald song now became more loud and unrestrained, and, as if watching for the ripeness of the wild debauch, the valet—after spreading about twenty yards of black satin on the floor before the fire—now quitted the room.

It must have been a fertile brain to have conceived such a ground—in a limner’s phraseology—for the *tableaux vivant* about to be displayed therein. And although peach-cheeked, blushing Modesty may turn from the picture; still, as the pencil of Truth sketched it, we will draw the curtain and let those look whose blood is not so easily mounted.

Their parts had been rehearsed, or the imaginations of the fair companions of the Marquis were more than ordinarily prolific. For no sooner were they left by Swiss than they quickly reduced the number of their garments to that worn by Eve when she first studied her natural charms in the reflected surface of the brook. Placing themselves in reclining postures upon the satin, which gave the same advantages to their beauty that a strong and favourable light does to a picture, they offered a sight so tempting to that grey-haired sensualist that he sat with greedy, gloating eyes, and seemed incapable of withdrawing his fixed and fascinated gaze.

“This is as it should be,” he said. “I always loved beauty undecorated. Nature, nature—stripped and perfect nature. Ha, ha,” and then, as if exhausted with excitement, he sunk back into his seat, and his features became black and convulsed.

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Matilde, springing from the ground. "*Mi lor* is dying!"

Scarcely were the words uttered when the valet, who, until now, had occupied the post of sentry at the door, rushed into the room, regardless of the condition of the ladies, and hastened to the assistance of his master. In an instant he forced some brandy between his clenched teeth, and bathed his temples with the spirit, knowing by past experience the remedies to be applied.

"*Mon Dieu, Mon Dieu!*" ejaculated Madeline, throwing a shawl over her shoulders. "If he die, what shall we do, Sweesse? We shall be call over de coals when de people sit upon him. *Ma foi!*"

"Hush, hush!" returned the valet. "It is but a fainting fit."

The Marquis gave one or two deep-fetched sighs, and slightly raising his eyelids, said, "Home."

"Immediately, my lord," replied the valet; and then turning to the ladies he directed them to make their toilets with all dispatch, adding, that "it was worse than he expected."

In a few minutes the Marquis was carried in an almost unconscious state to his carriage, and in a few days that carriage followed him to his grave.

Such was the closing scene in the life of the greatest debauchee the world has ever seen—the Marquis of Hereford.

CHAPTER XV.

THE moon's silver beams tipped wall and roof, and the cats were taking advantage of the stilly night to render their exchange of love, productive of many a muttered malediction from disturbed suitors to "the honey, heavy dew of slumber." Collectively to the devil were the amorous grimalkins consigned; and if wishes had had the power of realizing the desires so generally entertained, the fruitful colonies of rats and mice would, long ere this, like the Repealers of Ireland, have shaken off the laws of restraint, held public meetings, and, in like manner, squeaked for licence and for liberty. But the fates have decreed otherwise. 'Tis not for mortals or for mice to command success, let them be never so worthy of deserving it.

At this hour, then, when things of the night were awake—and not a few a great deal more so than was desirable for creatures of the day—when loyal and well-affected subjects were deeply buried in linen and calico sheets and blankets—when the cider cellars were echoing with toast, sentiment, and song—when Evans's convivial meeting was thronged with unfledged, embryo members of the bar and medical students walking the hospitals and billiard-rooms; their choice resting with the latter to a considerable degree—when the Garrick's Head was crammed to repletion with an admiring audience, assembled to hear those mirth-inspiring trials by judge and jury—when the Polish refugees were thronging “the rag and smash,” or some such distinguished pandemonium, to stake their pence, to lose, and starve—when—in short, when

Just the hour
That flashmen, like the midnight flower,
Scorn the ogle of scaly light,
And get up a row to have a fight
With flats to drop their tin.

In that celebrated neighbourhood, St Giles's, there is a select spot known by the name of “the Rookery.” Its architecture is not imposing to the visitor at first sight, and may be defined as coming under the irregular order. From the extensive dilapidations caused by the ravages of the seasons, and more especially by the return of the anniversary of Donnybrook fair—when the inhabitants enjoy the innocent recreation of pelting each other's windows with bricks and bats, and producing a faithful representation of a distant scene by fracturing the heads of their bosom friends with what are technically called “sprigs of shillaleh”—few, very few of the buildings are exempt from a free circulation of air, and especially exposed to the changes of the weather; still, there is anything but a lack of tenants or occupiers. Indeed, from the cellars to the garrets numerous families may be found appropriating a corner in each apartment to their respective household gods, and not a few study their interest rather than their convenience by taking in lodgers. The Rookery is, therefore, extremely populous; and, beneath the moon, there is not a place wherein the modes of obtaining a livelihood vary to such an extent within similar limits. To enumerate them would occupy greater space in these pages than we can afford; but it

may be mentioned here, that the majority by far of the inhabitants would find it an insuperable difficulty, an insoluble problem, to explain the "how" and the "wherefrom" their incomes are derived.

The entrance to this retreat for individuals of diversified and unapparent means is through a complication of posts, apparently erected for the express purpose of puzzling a person's ingress and egress. After threading this maze, the way is easy enough, as it is next to impossible to make a wrong turn, there being none to take. A narrow court—through which a patent street-sweeping machine never passed, and redolent with the fragrance of stale cabbage-leaves, orange-peel, oyster-shells, fish-bones, and other scraps of dainties sunk and sodden in the stagnant kennel—straight and long, and flanked by two rows of crazy tenements, form the exterior of this celebrated *locale*, the Rookery. Among these tottering, neither-wind-nor-weather-proof erections, however, there is, one lofty, imposing building, and that is—a gin shop. There is no crumbling rottenness about this gin shop. Oh, no! its walls are thick, and its towering roof rears itself proudly above the rickety ruins beneath, as if conscious of its own superiority. Large lamps throw their flaring light around, and invite the dram-drinking denizens with irresistible fascination. The presiding deity over this lordly pile is a member of the human family, either rejoicing in, or suffering under, the name of Joe Banks. And Joe Banks, we beg to inform our readers, is no common order of vegetable. To use his own graphic description, "I'm up to the mark—trained as fine as a needle; not too fine, but up to the point. Yes, yes; Joe Banks is what may be called a prize beast." This he has frequently thought, and as frequently said—we will leave it for others to decide whether he be worthy of the self-bestowed eulogism.

In a confined slip of a room behind the bar, commanding a view of the throng continually coming and going, sat Mr Joseph Banks, smoking a cigar with an infinite quantity of complacency in his demeanour. His chubby face—which had been intended for a healthful expression—bore somewhat of an ashy hue; but it was one that led an observer to conclude that the colour had an origin other than from the heart-ache or grievous mental endurance. Slightly pressed upon his brow was a very knowing gossamer, and being stuck considerably on one side, it gave him

a swaggering, rakish appearance. His costume was a decided improvement upon that of a cad to an omnibus, although it savoured strongly of an association thereto, and although his general appearance would not have conferred honour upon the church, had he been a clergyman, yet we have seen men, and many of them, with worse exteriors and better callings.

Upon the portrait of a prize-fighter, immediately before him, the eye of Joe Banks rested. We say "eye," because from one organ of vision he seemed to concentrate his sight, and peep out of it in a very narrow focus from a confined and extreme corner. Contemplation is a refined and pleasurable pastime, and Mr Banks at this moment was indulging in it. He was thinking of the immense advantages to be derived from "a cross at a mill," and such-like pastimes, where matters can be so admirably arranged. His thoughts were also mingled with the direful inroads upon his trade by father Mathew and the teetotal societies, and he reflected upon the benefit of bribing the whole of the temperance world, and getting them to take their "regulars" with the licensed victuallers. After what may be called chewing this speculation very small and finding it indigestible, Joe Banks heaved a deep sigh and a thick puff of tobacco smoke from his lips at one and the same time. Then regaining his composure, he stretched his legs and, without any perceptible emotion, looked rather sleepily at the commencement of a quarrel between two of the fair sex endeavouring to seek obliviousness from all earthly cares in quarters of Booth's cordial. The spirit of oblivion, however, seemed to operate with no soothing influence. Language of the most rare description—so rare, indeed, that in no dictionary extant can such be found—was bandied by the disputants, and this valve to their pent passions proving insufficient for the escape, they closed with each other like two angry bears, or Lords Brougham and Campbell, and made the welkin ring with their hearty thwacks. Now came the tug. In each other's arms they fastened a deadly gripe. Hair, cap, ribbon, and robe were soon torn and split from their fair proportions, and the ground spread with the ravages of the fray. But an Irish squabble is seldom permitted to be enjoyed by the original proprietors of it without the interference of the envious lookers-on. Quick as electricity the thirst for war spread through the assembled group of spectators. Some advocated one side, some the other, and by no

means a few made a promiscuous partisanship of it; at one moment rendering assistance to Mary, and then veering it to Nora. If inconsistency marked this proceeding, still it kept the interest alive; for whenever there appeared to be a chance of a decisive victory, the forces rallied on the side of the discomfited, and thus the fight was prolonged.

"Drap me as ye would a hot tater," cried Mary, planting her nails deeply into the windpipe of her enemy.

"Out wid ye!" responded Nora, disengaging her fingers from a lump of hair, and diving them once more among the dishevelled locks of her opponent for a second edition.

"Come, come, ladies," said Joe Banks, rising lazily from his chair and advancing towards the scene of contest. "Come, come, ladies," repeated he, "we've had enough of this diversion."

The row, however, continued, in spite of this expostulation.

"Blister your tongues!" hallooed Joe Banks, suddenly changing his demeanour from calm to stormy. "Blister your tongues! do you hear what I say?"

If they did, no heed was taken. The din continued in its pristine state, and the strife unabated.

"Very good," remarked Joe Banks, coolly turning up the cuffs of his coat, "then *I* must make one among ye."

Without further observation he rushed into the middle of the belligerents, and seizing Nora by the nape of the neck, jerked her adroitly from her enemy's inimical embrace.

"Make way there," cried the clutcher of the ungentle Nora, clearing his path by a most expeditious mode towards the door—that of knocking down everybody in it. "Make way there."

Fully cognizant, from precedents, that her ejection would be a summary process in the teeth of any exertion or persuasion that she might exercise to prevent it, Nora quietly and in silence submitted to the ordeal.

"Now then," said Mr Banks, arriving within a square yard of the closed, but swinging doors of his mansion, and swaying his burthen to and fro to obtain an impetus. "Now, then, out you go;" and, suiting the action to the word, he sent the pugilistic Nora against the doors, after the fashion that a harlequin may be seen to fly through a trap, and, with the same speed and dexterity, away she went, and as suddenly became lost to view.

"There," remarked Joe Banks, as the doors returned back on their hinges; "that's the way I'll serve all you ladies if ye don't keep your bunches of five's quiet when I tell ye. I'm cock bird here, remember."

Something akin to stillness reigned upon this proceeding and plain notification of ulterior measures; but it seemed, for the nonce, doubtful whether it would be of long duration. For, to apply a homely phrase, Nora no sooner picked up her crumbs, which she did without let or pause, than she returned to the spot of her recent defeat.

"Misther Banks," said she, sidling up to the landlord, and at the same time using the back of her hands in a primitive way in lieu of a handkerchief. "Misther Banks," she repeated in a subdued tone of admiration, while she shook back her thick and combined locks from off her scratched, gashed, and bleeding face, *what a playful rogue you are, Misther Banks.*"

Perhaps Mr Banks was; but if so, his looks belied him.

Order being restored, the belligerents offered the olive branch to each other with the same readiness that hostilities had been declared, and the glass of friendship went round with renewed sincerity—a sincerity as lasting as butter on a red-hot gridiron.

In so humble and lowly a spot as the Rookery, fraught with plebeian blood, it would scarcely be credited, were not our chronicler the amanuensis of truth, that the high born should sometimes visit it for noble and ignoble purposes—some for study, and some for sport.

"Ha, ha, ha."

That laugh made the blood of Joe Banks tingle through each nerve and intricacy of his frame. It almost startled him from his propriety; but quickly recovering his serenity and composure of carriage, he contrived to receive the Marquis of Riverford and his satellite, the Earl of Raspberry Hill, with becoming *nonchalance*. A few of the small fry, permitted to follow in their wake, also entered, and soon afterwards—but not an offshoot of that "right merrie companie"—a man followed wrapped in a capacious Spanish cloak, and his features hidden by a slouched hat which was pressed far down over his brow.

"Well, Joe!" exclaimed the Marquis of Riverford, vaulting over the bar and entering "the crib" for the select few in the rear, "here we are—what's the odds we don't astonish the natives?"

"A gale o' wind to a —," Mr Banks emitted a very small volume of smoke as an illustrative conclusion to the sentence—"that you do, my lord," continued he.

"I'd stand upon my head until I looked foolish, rather than not produce an effect," remarked Betsy, in a languishing voice, as if he had been refreshing himself upon milk and water or very weak lemonade.

"Egad!" exclaimed his noble friend, winking familiarly at Mr Banks, "if you, Raspberry Hill, began to cut out white, what could we hope to find in the main of jolly cocks?"

"Am I a jolly cock?" inquired Betsy, in the mild coo of a ring-dove.

"A jolly cock!" reiterated the Marquis of Riverford, bringing his clenched fist upon the table with such force that a half-finished glass of brandy and water hopped into the lap of Joe Banks. "If you're not a jolly cock, Betsy, where, I should like to know, are we to find a male Bantam?"

"That's right enough," echoed the landlord; "that's right enough, my lord."

"Have you a couple of pounds in silver, Joe?" drawled the flattered object of their praise.

"Yes," replied Mr Banks, producing the required coin and receiving the gold in exchange from the hand of his noble customer.

"What, are you going to have a scramble?" inquired the Marquis of Riverford.

"Yes," returned his companion, directing the landlord to put the silver in a shovel, and place it on the fire until every sixpence was red-hot.

Upon the fulfilment of this mandate, his lordship took the heated coin into the outer room, and addressed the admiring throng with the following neat and pithy speech.

"Now, you set of beggars"—the implication was more apt than intended—"now, you set of beggars," repeated he, "keep your daylights open and your potato-traps shut. Here's a few here who have burnt their fingers in getting money by more ways than one, and although some of ye may blister 'em in picking up this, yet the choice is entirely with yourselves whether the risk is worth running or not."

"Arrah, honey!" exclaimed a feminine voice. "Toss the

kine to us, and we'll show ye the vally we set on our fingers. Bad luck to 'em, but they'll stand a scorch."

In the middle of the expectant crowd the money was thrown, and then ensued a scene which baffles our poor powers of description. A pyramid of bodies in every imaginable attitude and form was piled upon the floor as if by magic. Yells, shouts, screams, and screeches rent the air, and not a few groans and curses were issued from the smothered and suffering base. In one thick heap, men, women, and even children sprawled with the common desire of each getting all that he could, in the eager contest, for himself. Despite the pains and penalties—despite the bruises, knocks, thumps, and squeezes—despite the scratches, kicks, blows, and crushing—despite the hot, hissing, scorching money when grasped, making the holders of it twist their faces like a monkey with his tail in a vice—despite all this, and more, the scramble was continued with unabated fervour until the last shilling was snatched from the ground.

With a roar of laughter the Marquis of Riverford, his companion, and Joe Banks witnessed the fun, and when it was brought to a finish they still had good cause for enjoyment to the peculiar tendency of their natures, in seeing the bodies unpack themselves from their intricacies and exhibit the woful damages to their gear and general exterior. There is an end, however, to all things, and the scramble and its effects—save the spending the substance, to Mr Banks's gain and profit, lasted a considerable period—became no longer a subject of interest or amusement to the Noble projectors.

"Who is that?" inquired the Marquis of Riverford, directing Joe Banks's attention to the stranger in the Spanish cloak and slouched hat, who during the *mêlée* had observed a total indifference and silence. Indeed, he appeared to be either asleep or unconscious of the proceedings; for there he stood, leaning against the wall, with his chin buried in his breast, and neither by sound or gesture evinced a symptom of knowledge or interest in that which could scarcely have failed to have fanned a spark of attention in the dead.

"He's a wonder," replied Joe Banks, "a reg'lar out-an'-out wonder," continued he. "For *I* can't make him out, and he must be a carpenter of no common powers to use a chisel when *I* can't take his edge off."

"What name does he hail by?" inquired the Marquis.

"I call him Stunnin' Mystery," returned Mr Banks, lighting a fresh cigar and regarding his lordship with a look which announced that he considered himself delivered of a very sage reply.

"What does he come here for?" asked Betsy.

"Ay," rejoined Joe knowingly, "that's what I want to know. But bless'd if I can diskiver!"

"Doesn't he drink?"

"No."

"Smoke?"

"No."

"Speak?"

"No."

"Why he's a conumdrum personified!" exclaimed the Marquis.

"A real out-an'-out riddle," returned Mr Banks. "One," continued he, "that'd puzzle the pimple of a slap-up scholar."

"How long has he been in the habit of coming here?" inquired the Earl of Raspberry Hill. "I never saw him before."

"About a week," replied the landlord.

"Haven't you asked him who he is, or what he comes for?" said the Marquis.

"No," rejoined Joe Banks. "Nobody's taken no notice of him, and he has taken no notice of nobody."

"By G—d!" exclaimed the Marquis of Riverford, "I'll squeeze a confession out of him if I have to sit upon his features. Here, you sir," continued he, addressing the incomprehensible stranger, "come here and explain yourself."

Still, however, in the same listless posture the man stood leaning against the wall.

"I can't put up with this any longer," observed the Marquis, going towards the mysterious individual, and in somewhat an abrupt way divesting him of his concealing beaver.

The Marquis started, and well he might, at that which met his view.

Reader, doubt not—question not the veracity of the declaration, when 'tis said the shadowy ghost of an Emperor was there, and upon this hangs a tale.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE days are gone when it was the wont of spirits, and things through which the pale moonbeams streak unimpeded, to answer to the call of the witch and the wizard, and quit the vasty depths and realms of sooty sin. Still "the earth hath bubbles," and the wayfarer, let him be as careless an observer of the world's surface as the blind, blundering mole, cannot but see apparitions of strange events and phantoms of passing wonders sufficient to convince the most sceptical that the age we live in is not devoid of the influence of astrological circles, the conjuror's art, miracle, and mystery.

Effects are so often the reflections of such secret and hidden causes, that to attempt to dive beneath the surface and peep at their source and spring, is a futile expenditure of exertion and labour. As well might we try to gimble a hole to the globe's centre, and have a spy at its axle. However, as far as within the compass of our abilities to lay bare the machinery working the woof of the adventures, and pulling the strings of our puppets on the stage, we will to the work with a will, and make them dance a jig to as merry a tune as was ever scraped on catgut.

Within this world—this sublunary atom—there are many worlds. There is the fashionable world, the sporting world, the literary world, the play world, the mercantile world, and heaven knows how many minor satellites besides! And each is so occupied with the space allotted for its own particular evolutions, that next to nothing is known or cared for concerning its jostling neighbour. Now the Emperor was a man well known, and known only to the world of play. Worshipping the goddess of fickle chance, he sued for her favours in every form proffered for the infatuated devotee. When but a stripling he commenced his adulation, and from sunset to sunrise continued to yield to the object of his passion. There was not a table in Europe where the "punter" might risk his substance, from an unlimited amount to the confined stake of a single penny, but that he visited and patronized with a willing hand and decreasing wealth. Experience taught him nothing. It was in vain that he was told the dice were loaded, so that the main he was in the constant habit of calling, like the majority of gamblers, could not be

thrown. It was in vain that he was told the roulette table was clogged and blocked, so that the ball could not enter one-third of the divisions. It was in vain that he was told that at *rouge et noir* the dealer palmed the cards, and made either colour win that suited the interest of the bank. It was in vain that he was told, when backing a seeming stranger's hand, that he was a "bonnet," and mere decoy to lead him into the mesh. In short, the artifices used in *every game that is played* to render it so far from being one of chance, that it is a positive certainty against the "punter," he believed to be the mere effects of a run of ill luck, and that in the end turn it must. With this opinion, which became more stubborn in its growth, he continued to feed the appetites of those who were already whetted for his ruin. The Emperor—such was the title awarded to him by the harpies of pandemonium—essayed to make no let or stop in his career. From youth to manhood, from manhood to age, he still maintained the same course; and when silvered with the fall and decline of life, he found himself beggared and friendless. Where he once had been a welcome visitor he now was denied even admittance. Those who were most profuse in their professions of regard and esteem, and who were ever ready to turn the approving look and smiling lip, found, when the old man's gold was gone, a sudden lapse in their memories; and they ceased to think of one no longer either to them valuable or useful. Such was the condition of this king of gamblers, and such is the condition of ninety-nine out of every hundred. Penniless, old, and friendless, the Emperor became, indeed, but a ghost of what he was. Decrepit and infirm, attenuated and forlorn, he wandered, like some restless sprite, to such scenes of his former days of prosperity as were still unclosed to his admission. Here he would falteringly beg for a trifling loan from some acquaintance, and barely allowing himself the necessary to allay his craving hunger, hurry again to stake his mite, and throw even this into the yawning jaws of the wolf of ruin. But these precarious resources at length failed to pander to his still yearning taste for play. Those who reluctantly yielded to his petition, now peremptorily refused to accede to it; and gaunt poverty, in the hideous garb of absolute starvation, tracked his heels in his unceasing restless wanderings, for he never seemed to stop in his quick shuffling gait. At all hours of the day and the night he might be seen, at various dark and

misty spots of the west end, muffled in a capacious ragged cloak and slouched hat, and hurrying forwards, as if with no other object than to obey the oft-repeated order of some hoarse-throated policeman "to move on." So singularly rapid were the Emperor's movements, that he appeared to possess the powers of ubiquity. One saw him here, another there; and yet the time was the self-same minute, although the distances were wide and far. At length the Emperor became a mysterious being. Like a shadow upon a wall, no one knew from whence he came or whither he went. When least expected there he was; when most expected to be present, for neither window nor door, nor crevice, nor chink, offered an outlet or escape for that noiseless vanishing and melting imperceptibly from vision—he was gone. Men started at hearing their names whispered by that low, hissing voice, and when they turned to face the speaker, all that met their view was the rent and torn end of the well-known cloak as it flitted from view, either mid a crowding throng or round some sharp and abrupt corner of the street. The Emperor was a dreaded object. When the revel mounted to its loudest pitch, like the ghost of Banquo, he glided in, and occupied a seat prepared for a more welcome guest. There was a frosty chill, too, about his presence which stilled the loud shout and roar of the most hilarious. It was the popular and received belief that whenever and wherever his thin, sharp-set, wrinkled features became sensible to sight, that difficulties of a no ordinary kind were within the range of the levelled rifle of Time. In various shapes the missiles were hurled; but to the mark they went with unerring aim. Dealing, and pretending to deal, however, in no wild conjuring of the brain, but in plain, real, unvarnished facts, we will at once puff the foggy cloud from the footlights, and exhibit the Emperor stripped of all false guise and meaning.

To live—yes, we all cling to life. There is not one so truly wretched but still deems his life too valuable to part withal. The insane suicide who snuffs the spark from the flickering, ill-conditioned lamp of his existence, would shudder to yield himself to die in the cool soberness of reflection. We can all do desperate deeds in desperate moments; but it does not follow that such impulses should be deemed, either for good or for evil, the fair index of the inward spirit to action. Many a good man has been compelled to lead a bad life, and although he never turns, like a

harc hard pressed, he may never have the opportunity. Virtue is not so virtuous as it frequently appears to be; neither is vice so vicious.

To live—yes, the shadowy, spectral Emperor felt that he *must* live. By hook or by crook nature required certain lodgments and detainers, and in order to acquire these indispensable requisites he embraced an opportunity—offered by some one of those chances which men have thrust upon them as unexpectedly as the schoolboy gaping in a hail storm swallowed a biffin—to serve writs and declarations for Mr Shallow and such like ornaments, corner-stones, and pillars of the law. No wonder, then, that the Emperor was as much feared by trembling hide-and-seek debtors as the Emperor of all the Russias is by the seedy Poles. At all times and seasons he thrust his unwelcome presence among those whose payments had been in the uncirculating medium of promises. When in the security of their snug retreats and by-spots for fun and glee, they considered themselves as free from danger of a process-server as if in enjoyment of the sanctuary of a cathedral, in came the Emperor, and then the lamps—if they did not burn blue as brimstone—turned ashy pale, and the welkin ceased to echo with a roar. By Saint Paul, the Emperor proved a very iceberg to the merry-making and the joys of those who live not by the stiff-starched rules of save-pence,

Screwy, economic fools.

He knew full well the haunts, the holes and corners, where they were to be found, and with the spirit of a ferret hunting fleeing rats, he stole upon them unawares, and pounced upon them in the very bowels of their supposed defences. Alive to every likely covert for the holding of his prey, the Emperor beat from bush to briar with an industry ever constant to its purpose. To the sharp and greedy practitioner he soon became an invaluable servant; for let the bird be never so shy he was certain—figuratively speaking—to quickly drop salt upon his tail. As if some supernatural agency assisted him in these undertakings, he seemed to know the when and the where the design could be accomplished with the greatest facility. Just at the most fitting moment he would insert one of those crisp, unpleasant documents, a copy of a writ, into the hand of a victim, and then melt from his view without giving the faintest opportunity of meeting with the muttered salute of a curse or a kick in return.

Now, among the shyest birds that ever ducked from a missile of the law was, without an exception, the Marquis D'Horsay. His maxim had long been "catch me who can;" at the same time, acting up to the patent-safety rule of "prevention being so much better than cure," he afforded no facilities whatever of being hobbled in the chase. At bay he kept the yelping pack, and within the good, stout, brick walls of his covert he maintained both a pleasant and a secure retreat from the dangers besetting him. He now no longer ventured to frame himself, as it were, in his cab, and exhibit his colours and attractions to the curious crowds, except on that privileged day—when even the debtor is at liberty to rest—the seventh of the week. Then, indeed, he issued forth, decked as of old, and, like a bird free from the confines of his cage, made the most of the brief hours of his freedom.

Every art, every manœuvre within the subtle and almost inexhaustible resources of those apt functionaries of the law who are ever on the alert to deprive the subject of his liberty, let him be never so chary of the preservation of it, had been put in force to trap our hero; but hitherto in vain. Mr Sloughman, truly, arrived within a short journey of accomplishing this much-desired end; still he was frustrated, and now among the ranks of bums there was a cloud which damped their hopes and mildewed their energies. The Marquis was not to be grabbed, and they knew it. With flagging spirits the attempts were renewed over and over again. Bribes and offers of reward were extended liberally to his menials for their traitorous assistance in obtaining the design, but they had been too well selected, and knew their own interests depended on no such frail and fleeting benefits. False messengers in all garbs and disguises, upon all kinds of errands and excuses, applied for admission and interviews. Even—yes, even the fair sex were at last made not bearers of Love's despatches, but conveyancers of stern writs, notices of declarations, trials, and such like means to the end and breaking up of a man of fashion. Still the Marquis was proof against all these attacks, let them come in what shape they would. At length the Emperor's sagacity becoming notorious, he was applied to by Mr Shallow to render his all-powerful assistance in rendering the Marquis sensible to the electrical influence of a strip of paper so frequently chilling the blood and blanching the cheek of the most callous of heart and iron of nerve.

"How he manages to keep out of the way, God only knows," exclaimed Mr Shallow, slapping his crossed dexter leg, as he sat in his office one morning while the Emperor stood deferentially by, smoothing his gossamer in a succession of rubs, and listening to the ill-concealed vexation of the lawyer. "I say," repeated Mr Shallow, giving vent to his spleen by pinching the calf of his own spindle, "how he keeps out of the way, God only knows; but he *does* it somehow or other. The sharpest chaps in London have been set at him, and yet not one can manage to nail him. Now, what do you think *you* can do?"

"If he was anywhere but in heaven," replied the Emperor, "I would get admittance to him."

"You need not have qualified your declaration with that *if*," rejoined Mr Shallow, jocularly. "He may, with many of the like kidney," continued he, "be deemed of the earth so exceedingly mouldy, that there is but little chance, at present at least, of his becoming one of the celestial bodies."

"I'll undertake the business, sir," returned the Emperor, "and you will find successfully."

"Very good," added Mr Shallow, regarding the ceiling immediately above his head in the humour reflective. "I hope you will, and the success will be attended with ten pounds for the accomplishment. Should this attempt, however," resumed he, more by way of communing with himself than for the information of the Emperor, "prove like many that have preceded it, I shall toy and dally no longer, but go on to outlawry. *That's* the nest egg I have in reserve."

"And one which the most cautious can't avoid," returned the Emperor.

"No," said Mr Shallow with a chuckle; "we can reach them by proclamation, let them be at Boulogne, Brussels, or at the devil himself. Yes, yes, we can reach them by that vehicle, although we can't put the screw on to squeeze them very tightly by it."

"Unless," continued the Emperor, looking cunningly out of the corners of his eyes, "unless their honour presses upon the corn."

"Ha!" ejaculated Mr Shallow, quickly; "in that case, and they have the means remaining, there is nothing that brings them to book more readily. But the Marquis——" and then he shook

his head despondingly, "is too well blown to care about such trifles. No, no, no. However, I am determined to apply it as a last resource, if no other presents itself of a more desirable nature."

"You'll find," replied the Emperor, putting the prepared writ into the only sound pocket that he possessed, "that *I'll* unkennel him."

"And mark you!" rejoined Mr Shallow, lifting a finger, to impress upon the Emperor the value and weight of his observation, "if you do, I've sufficient work in my office, for the serving of writs alone, to occupy you for the remainder of your venerated and honourable age."

CHAPTER XVII.

AY, it's a brave sight—a heart-stirring, blood-quickenings, pulse-throbbing, right gladsome sight! There they were in flaunting scarlet and bright Lincoln green,—men, hounds, and horses, all eager for the fun. The meet was at the well-known hill of Salt, and that Quixotic hero of the gold and pink, the inimitable Davis, sat on the pigskin as if glued to its surface, surrounded by many a dashing knight of the chase and aspiring hero for distinction. The appointed hour for the throw off had long since not only been well dipped into, but its successor was on the wane, and the shadow on the unerring dial of the sun scarcely permitted it to be called the still babbling noontide. But no wonder; for Lord Chesterlane was the master of the royal buckhounds then, and desperately late was his lordship in all such matters and arrangements. Yet who shall ever look upon the like again? Then, indeed, was the regal hunt a dainty dish for the most fastidious of palates. There was no cutting down and shaving clean; no slicing and squeezing a few save-alls out of the net revenue for his Majesty's hounds. No, no. His lordship made ducks and drakes of the few paltry thousands in breakfasts at Botham's, and trebled the legitimate expenditure out of his own private purse. Those were the times for the feeders of all kinds: from the humble bipeds who mingled kit and meal for the aristocratic quadrupeds, to the cedar-topped gourmonds stretching their boots and buckskins 'neath the

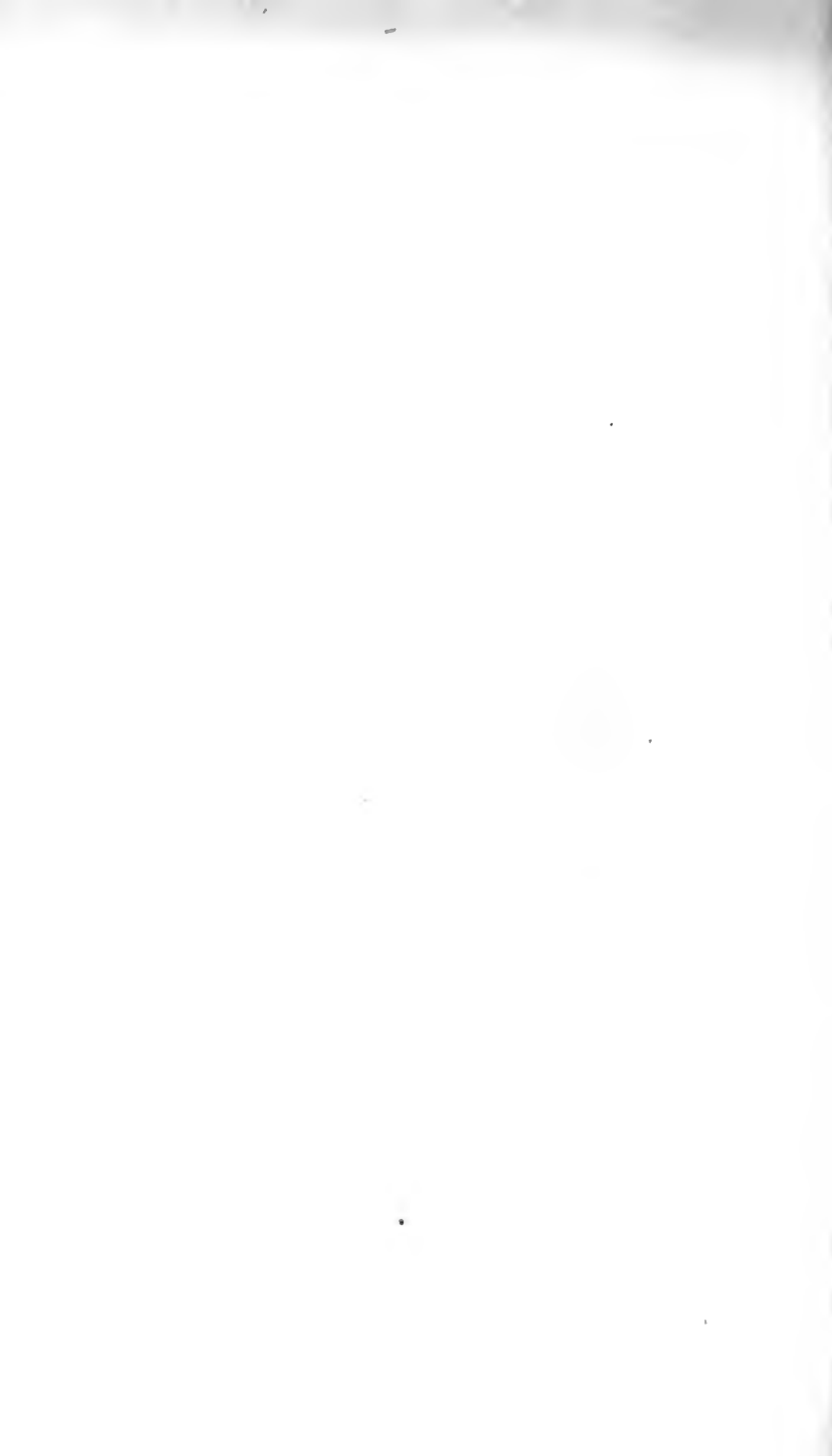
polished mahogany at his lordship's cost and charges. These days, however, have long since floated down the stream of forgetfulness, and, although we may turn to the mirror of the past for a reflection, still, by Saint Hubert! the conjuring of our fancy leaves a sigh of regret in the remembrance that such days may never come again.

However, there they were—by *they*, we mean everything and everybody—in the very bloom and blushing of their yet unplucked, ungathered spirit of joy. Some were mounting, others were mounted, and all, with impatience thrilling from spur to caput, were primed, cocked, and ready for the burst. Truth being the chronicler of our sayings and doings, we are here compelled to add, a few “jumping balls,” in the guise of cherry bounce, champagne, strong ale, and moistening fluids of varied kinds and natures, possessed, perhaps, no insignificant influence in producing. Be that as it may, each pressed toe in stirrup, and felt, as he flung himself into the ready saddle, that he was a match for fleeter things than ever skimmed earth, sea, or air.

And who is the well-moulded, pliant figure on that nag coming under the denomination of the class “varmint looking.” Forsooth, but “the Queen of the Chase” shall lead the field a merry bat to-day. Her heart is lighter than the gossamer, and it will go hard, indeed, but that she floats at the head of the foremost rank, with “her soul in her task, turning labour into sport.” Diana, ’tis said, was both coy and beautiful. Now it cannot be alleged, with the fact backing the assertion, that her Majesty of the regal pack and Surrey foxhounds rests much of her attraction and charms on the former quality of birdlime. Superlative bashfulness finds no peg whereon to suspend her glove in the dominions of the present reigning Queen of the Chase. She has no such maid of honour in the service of her court; but prefers a frankness of spirit which can only be graphically conveyed in her own proper tongue.

“I say, Ginger,” observed her Majesty, to a remarkably clean-shaved, neatly-dressed man, somewhat conspicuous by reason of a white and stiffly starched neckerchief twisted so smoothly round his throat, that—in the praseology of an observant laundress—“it seemed to be got up and ironed there.” “I say, Ginger,” repeated the Queen, “in what kind of a fashion does your mare face timber?”





"In a way that may chance to show you her heels," replied Ginger, in a loud key.

"Ah!" rejoined her Majesty. "You needn't take such pains to let us all know she's for sale;" and then a roar of laughter from the surrounding listeners saluted the reply to Mr Ginger's advertisement.

"What's the odds, Ginger," asked the Queen, "that I don't ride straighter to hounds to-day than you?"

"A thousand to nothing if I'll let you," returned Ginger.

"Let me!" exclaimed her Majesty. "Ha, ha! What the deuce have you got to do with letting me, I should like to know?"

"That which a few others seem to be in no way inclined," returned Ginger, bringing to view a set of particularly even and white teeth—"letting you alone."

"The fox and the grapes, old boy—the fox and the grapes," added the Queen, lifting her whip, and shaking it derisively at him.

Then again the laugh was raised at the expense of the object of her attack; and so loud and merry was it that even the grim and ghostly huntsman felt almost inclined to summons up a smile. "Chessy's very late to-day," observed her Majesty, at the conclusion of the mirth-stirring sound.

"Better late than never," replied a voice, and, upon turning to the speaker, there was the Earl of Chesterlane close to her elbow. "Better late than never," repeated he.

"Ah, Chess!" exclaimed the Queen, exchanging a pressure of two fingers—and pretty taper fingers they were, too—"we've been all at our prayers for your presence."

"And may never a loving lip nor a zephyr from the balmy south salute the cheek of beauty, but your orisons have at length been effective," poetically returned his lordship.

"I have something to say that will amuse ye," rejoined her Majesty, moving her horse close to the side of his lordship's.

"The rule is so utterly devoid of an exception," returned the Earl, gallantly, "that I could almost wish the announcement had been a probability of creating *ennui*."

"Adzooks!" ejaculated the Queen, "your compliments are like the swallows in spring gaping at every fly. But what think you of Cook's dunning me for this habit he had the honour of building in accordance with your orders?"

"That it is merely one of his simple arithmetical rules of subtraction and compound interest," replied the Earl.

"I told him," rejoined the Queen, without noticing his lordship's quirk answer, "that since he had had the felicity of an introduction to me from you, he might place the item to the ancient account of so very old and creditable a customer."

"By his thimble and goose!" said his lordship, "I trust the tenth of a male mortal did not decline such reasonable instructions."

"Not flatly," replied her Majesty; "but for a tailor he portrayed a boldness of language and manner scarcely compatible with a member of his craft."

"How so?" shortly inquired the Earl.

"He said," replied the Queen, flirting a highly-scented handkerchief from her saddle-bow, "that he *must* be paid."

"The Goth!" exclaimed his lordship. "I've a mind to tantalize him with a short-dated promise. And I would, too, were it not to inflate his hopes with pleasure, however short-lived."

And now the willow-limbed monarch of the wild was left to spring from the narrow limits of his prison, and out he leaped with a mighty bound, and turned—as well he might—a haughty, disdainful glance upon the surrounding mob yelling at his *début*.

With distended nostrils he sniffed the breeze, and then springing a step or two upon the ground, as if to test the strength of his thews and sinews, he threw back his graceful antlers until they reached his haunch, and then, like some arrow winged from a stalwart bow of yore, he swept along and topped the brake and briar, fence, rail, ditch, and brook, and made his very shadow skim at a longer distance from his body than a thing of slower movement.

"Hold hard!"

"Give them time, gentlemen," cries the Earl. "One moment. Let them get at it."

Faugh! Who can check the ambitious longings of that moment?

"For'ard, for'ard—hark for'ard, hark!"

Away they sped. Mettle, blood, and bone lifts them in every stride. Music—sweeter never stirred the heart or pulse of man—is being rung from throats that echo the joy in every breast.

Now they top the bank and opposing wall like skimming pigeons. On, on they sweep. "High over!" The Queen of the Chase leads the field. Crane not, thou stubborn-bearded, steel-heeled Nimrod. See, a woman is before you. Cram the rowels deep into his flanks. Now tighten the snaffle; hold him well together; keep his head straight as a whistling bullet from a well-levelled rifle; steady your hand—he will not flinch nor swerve. No, he feels as you feel—what must be, must—and, taking stern compulsion by the forelock, flies the bold impediment with the ease of thought and triumph of success.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

By the gods! she can laugh as well as she can ride. And if she could not with so much facility, the occasion would have oiled the hinge. There he goes! The discomfited Ginger is seeking to embrace mother earth in a vagary of movements ere he makes the final hug. Like a hoop he whirls mid air, and then, upon the flat of his back, he exhibits his fair proportions without sense or motion.

"Catch my horse!" shouts an unknown inhabitant of murky Cockaigne, left on the wrong side of a thick-set hedge.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Queen mocks the unhappy adventurer, and ere he can recover the dizziness in his brain, rising and sparkling like a thumped bottle of soda water, all has passed away, leaving not "even the baseless fabric of a vision" in the rear.

Ride on, ride on; or hope not to hear again the cry of hounds to-day. Mile after mile is scoured with breathless haste. Here they are, and now they are gone. The ruddy and bronzed cheek of the ploughman, as he stays his team to watch the inspiring chase sweep by, becomes heightened in its flush, and, giving vent to the thrill of enthusiasm vibrating through his English heart—for English hearts alone know what 'tis to feel the inspiring melody of a huntsman's cheer—halloos himself hoarse, and shouts until not a sign or vestige of the pursuing and pursued remains. Urchins clamber to the topmost branches of the loftiest trees to view with straining eyes the inspiring sight; while old and blear-eyed women hobble to their cottage doors, and, shading with upraised hands their weakened vision, chuckle with glee, and rub their withered palms in very ecstasy.

Still the chase went on.

At the head of every one—even a good fair length from Davis, who ever pricks over all as it pleases destiny to send—the Queen of the Chase rides right gallantly. Then chinked and clanked the gold couples adorning the shoulders of the noble master, doing, in vain, his best to gain her side. Wilton, Uxbridge, Paget, Errol—sportsmen true from heart to heel—now remember a petticoat flirts before ye; and, although we would urge each and all to approach it, yet mistake not the innocence of our meaning. Temptation is ever on, above, beneath, or about that simple garment—simple in its structure, but intricate in the secret and hidden powers of its attraction. Beware, ye followers of the chase, how ye run into a petticoat. There may be—nay, there is—danger in securing a stag or in pulling down a fox; but the risks of dislocations and such like dangers are as a crock of gold to a worm-eaten nut compared to——we were going to write “pulling down a petticoat;” but the phrase would have been incorrect, both figuratively and literally speaking; and so let the fertile imagination of others add that which the dictionary of our remembrance fails to supply.

It was a bold leap—one that made more than one pair of eyes stare and gape full wide to see it taken; but 'tis a question which remains an open one to this hour, whether the fair and fearless rider's did not stretch from lid to lid, with greater space atween than those witnessing her boldness, when she found herself poised in the thin, unresisting air, and about to annihilate a loving couple twined within each other's arms. Good pilotage is “touch an' go,” and never was it more felicitously illustrated. Another short twelve inches, and it would have been a crash of ribs and limbs, and slender fragile bones; so fragile that not one was formed by nature to bear a greater pressure than a brace of loving arms to one round, slender waist.

The hour was an early one for a pic-nic; but still there is no accounting for taste. Why not unroof the top of a pigeon pie in the misty fog of the morn in spring, as in the softer hour of the decline of noon? But then there *was* no pie. A cold salad might have proved an excuse and extenuation of the circumstance; but, save the green grass on which they sat, not a blade, nor a leaf, not even a watercress offered the means or

appliances wherewith to mix a cooling mingling of such innoxious ingredients.

Then why were they there?

In truth, gentle reader, more especially if your blood creeps through the intricacies of your frame with the action of a machine wound up to tell the lazy hours how to doze and stick in the creaking joint of Time, we cannot describe the cause. A cause there was without a doubt, and one which bears only the conception of a delicate thought; not a plain, blunt delineation.

But to the point.

"High over!" cheered the Queen of the Chase, throwing out her whip hand as her straight flyer rose at a yawning leap, and—shades of Cupid and of Psyche!—within the length and stretch of a few barleycorns, as they reached earth again, there reclined the Marquis D'Horsay clasped in the warm, fresh, rosy, pinky arms of a daisy-mead daughter and rural fair one, "the pride of the village."

"Away, away!" hallooed the Queen, laughing merrily at her untoward discovery. "The whole hunt will be upon ye in a few seconds."

"Confusion!" exclaimed the Marquis, rising and making a precipitate retreat behind the broad trunk of a tree. "We must not be seen, Clara. The laugh would be terribly against us."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THERE is an end to all things. We are told that even the stars must fade away, and that the sun will, at length, grow dim with age. Certain it is, in more confined spheres and hemispheres, the end is scarcely out of view of the beginning. From infancy to youth, from youth to age, and from age to death, seem but so many leaves of a well-worn volume, exhausted at a single glance. But we are "i' the vein sentimental," when we profess to deal only with "the follies of the day." Then hence the leaden thought! We will deal only with the outside and very surface of the cover.

"Over the water," in reply to "Where is So-an'-so?" is quite as comprehensive as giving the information more minutely.

To "Where are his letters to be addressed?"—the answer, "Post office, Belvedier place, Surrey," is equally intelligible. No one but a pudding-brained bumpkin would seek for further explanation. There are a great many matters bearing an especially innocent and even agreeable tendency under the shade and protection of varnish and false colouring, which, unshelled and scraped, would offend the eye and grate more unpleasantly upon the ear than the squeaking of an un-oiled axle. "Residing over the water," for instance, is nothing in comparison with "a prisoner in the Queen's Bench." The latter would be offensive, as a direction, to the oldest inhabitant of that district, more limited than the one from which Rasselas found an extreme difficulty to escape, and offering greater difficulties for so desirable an object. Not a single individual of the many within its walls and confines, but would feel himself aggrieved and his honour impugned by such a designation. No, no, no. 'Tis a grave offence, and one which the law holds to be so, to call things by their proper names. We must roll them in well-selected wrappers and envelopes, highly glossed and perfumed, and then 'twere little harm to serve up the nicest information, and to lay bare the most secret "wheels within wheels" moving the intricate machinery of life.

The Bench *was* anything but a hideous dungeon for its captives; but, like many other modern institutions, despoiled of attraction and of privilege, it presents a very different appearance now to the state and condition of its high and palmy days. There was a time when men sojourned there, and lived, in spite of the law of creditor and debtor, upon the very cream and fat of the land. To them the allotment of a certain space to air themselves in, with the recreations of racket, bowls, skittles, and suchlike games, was anything but a mode of teaching economy or utility to their lives of wastefulness. "Eat, drink, and be merry," was the motto with all and each; and from him who cooked his own mutton chop—when he could get it—to him who had it cooked whenever he felt an impulse for mutton, this was the standing rule which seldom, indeed, was invaded by an exception. Slipped and robed in the most negligent, free-an'-easy manner, there, in swaggering, devil-may-care air and humour, might be seen those who had ever deemed a confiding creditor fair game for their respective plucking. The jest was

"who had dived deepest into the affections" of the trusting multitude too desirous for profits in empty figures, and over-anxious for the names of customers in their ledgers rather than the solid benefits of their legitimate dealings. And extravagance, eked on by the facilities rendered to the fanning of the flame, finds but a sorry cure in the punishment applied for the redress of its wrongs committed, or the punishment for them where no redress can be extracted.

Young, old, wrinkled, fat, lean—all kinds, all sorts, and all natures were, but a little time since, mingling denizens within the semi-circular walls of the Queen's Bench. Eccentric, misshapen, and distorted in mind, in habit, and in person, the imprisoned debtor exhibited but a lamentable proof of a bad law badly administered. Degraded and debased, careless of the past and reckless of the future, idling in forced necessity to earn not even his daily crust—at least by honest means—and mingling in a throng of the vicious and the dissolute, what could be the only effect of such captivity? Surely not a beneficial one to the vindicating or protective laws, professing to produce good, and good only, in being carried into operation by the stern and pointed finger of justice.

As we have previously said, "there is an end to all things," and there stands a fair illustration of the asserted truism. A large, bloated, drowsy owl stands blinking by his side, while he, with lighted hookah, is puffing thick volumes of smoke from his lips, and exhibits scarcely one link in the animal creation above the dull intellect of that proverbially stupid bird "frighting the dull ear of night with her hideous screech." Yes, there is the terminus of the good name, station, character, and all that a man should prize more dear than life itself, in the person of that young English nobleman. Lord Huntingcastle has arrived at the finish on the road to ruin. Quick, indeed, has been the pace—quicker than any other member of his class; although it must be admitted that there have been many who, in the same path, have not permitted the grass to grow under their feet.

Hastening through the bearded, moustached, slippered, dirty-shirted, cadaverous crew, standing at some short distance from Lord Huntingcastle, a thin, pale-faced, and somewhat gentlemanly-looking person approached.

"Ah, Captain Caughty!" exclaimed his lordship,* moving towards the stranger, "what's in the wind—keck—that brings you—keck—here?"

"I'm not in the army now," replied the *ci-devant* captain, with a cunning leer. "I'm a Count now, mind you."

"The devil you are," returned his lordship. "And—keck—what induced you to change—keck—your title?"

"A good, snug reason of my own," added the Count. "But to business," continued he, placing his arm familiarly through one of Lord Huntingcastle's, and making him walk thus linked by his side, dropped his voice to a whisper, and continued. "You know Sir Robert Bill?"

"Slightly," replied his lordship.

"You must improve the acquaintance, then," rejoined the Count. "*He* has money. *We* want money. You understand?"

"A plant—keck—I suppose."

"Exactly so," returned the Count. "And I intend that you should be first fiddler."

"But—keck—perhaps I won't scrape," said his lordship.

"In that case," replied the Count, in the tone deliberate, "you'll provoke my hostility. Remember there is a nice little rod in pickle in the shape of an indictment for perjury."

"I committed no more—keck—perjury than you did," rejoined his companion.

"Very likely not," returned the Count; "and I neither know nor care about that part of the affair. Sufficient for my purpose," continued he, "that appearances are against you, and so would be the verdict of a jury."

"I don't think it would," said his lordship.

"You wouldn't like the risk of testing it," replied his companion."

"No—keck—no, I should not, Caughty," returned Lord Huntingcastle, in a flurried manner.

"Then you must conform to my plans and wishes," rejoined the Count, regarding his lordship with the look of a cannibal.

"What are they?"

"Give a dinner—you know how to give one—and I'll bring Sir Robert Bill with me," replied the Count.

"Yes?" said his lordship, interrogatively.



"Then, when primed, you'll propose a little chicken, and with these despatches," continued the Count, taking from his waistcoat pocket a couple of dice, "you'll——"

"What are despatches?" inquired his lordship.

"Upon my honour!" replied the Count, peevishly, "you are almost too green to live, Huntingcastle. Not to know what despatches are! Confound it——"

"You can—keck—tell me, can't ye, without so much—keck—blarney?" said his lordship.

"Yes, yes," replied the Count, modulating his tone of indignation. "Well!" continued he, "these, d'ye see, are loaded so that they'll cast the main seven and no other."

"Indeed!" returned his companion, taking the dice and examining them with a scrutinizing gaze, and much after the fashion of a child inspecting the mysteries of a new toy.

"You'd never discover how it's managed," remarked the Count.

"And so—keck—they'll always throw a seven?" said Lord Huntingcastle.

"Or a nick to it," replied his friend.

"They're safe tools to play with," returned his lordship, tossing the dice in the air and catching them dexterously.

"Very," added the Count. "Sir Robert calls five always, and therefore, with an occasional change, which we can ring now and then to sweeten him on, he can be eased of some of his superfluous cash with the greatest facility and comfort to all parties in the pie."

"Except himself," said his companion.

"Ah! that's a secondary consideration," replied the Count. "We never study the feelings of a live goose when plucking it," continued he, metaphorically.

"That's true," rejoined his lordship. "But—keck—what makes you then—keck—study mine?"

"You're *plucked*," returned his friend, with frankness and with candour. "There's a vast deal of difference between the past and the present."

"Ay," added Lord Huntingcastle. "I—keck—quite forgot the state of my feathers."

"If ignorance were bliss," observed his friend, "'twere folly to remember."

"And what am I to have for the plant?" asked his lordship.

"I'm liberal in all my schemes," replied the Count. "Half of the pull and profits will be your share."

"And can he stand a heavy one?" inquired his companion.

"I should say that he was good for a clean ten thousand," replied the Count.

"Then—keck—we'll lighten his pockets—keck—quickly."

"But not *suddenly*," added the Count. "No, no, no. It must be managed in homœopathic quantities, and, as atoms make a mountain, so atoms continually subtracted from it reduce it to a level. I must assist actively in the reduction of Sir Robert's loose coin by teaching him the game of *ecarté*."

"Teaching him!" repeated Lord Huntingcastle, laughing. "He'll—keck—pay dearly enough for the information."

"I deserve a good premium," returned the Count. "My society," continued he, "is very agreeable to strangers, and people must pay for luxuries, you know."

"But it is—keck—agreeable to strangers only," rejoined his lordship. "When you—keck—come to be known——"

"There's a great difficulty in being trusted," added the Count.

"Yes," said his noble friend, "and even—keck—with *my* endorsement you were found out—keck—upon one occasion."

"Smith's?" shortly asked the Count.

"Yes," replied his lordship.

"Ah! that was a stupid affair," rejoined his friend. "The introduction proved to be neither profitable nor useful."

"Do you know what they—keck—were afraid of—keck—when they discovered who you were?" inquired Lord Huntingcastle.

"No," replied the Count.

"Their spoons," rejoined his lordship.

"By G—d!" swore the Count, "if I had thought that there would have been such a jaw about my stretching my legs under that table, I would have eased it or the sideboard, you may rest assured."

"I'm glad, at least—keck—then, you didn't anticipate it," returned his companion.

"Glad or otherwise," said the Count, "I consider myself an ill-used individual in that business, and that you owe me a good—very good turn for it."

"How so?" inquired Lord Huntingcastle.

"How so?" repeated the Count. "Wasn't I blown up by a whole pack of yelpers, and did I get a brass farthing by it?"

"That was no fault—keck—of mine," returned his lordship. "You asked me——"

"*Asked!*" interrupted his companion. "What is there you *could* refuse me?"

"Well, then—keck—*made* me introduce you—keck—to the house of a gentleman," replied his noble friend. "I am not responsible—keck—for your acts of compulsion."

"I hate arguing," said the Count. "Let us drop the subject. When will you give this dinner?"

"Your day and hour—keck—must be mine," replied his lordship.

"Don't repeat '*must*' and '*made*' so frequently," rejoined the Count. "I shall begin to think you're growing desperate, and there's nothing so desperate as a coward."

"I wish—keck—you'd keep such opinions to yourself," said his companion.

"I will, if they disturb ye," replied the Count. "But to the dinner. What say you to the day after to-morrow?"

"The time?"

"Seven," returned his friend.

"Very good," added his lordship. "You'll find—keck—a decent spread for you."

"And the dessert," replied the Count, facetiously, "will be in accordance with your *deserts*. Good night."

"Good night," returned Lord Huntingcastle, and as he said so there was a secret resolve within himself that the event desired by the Count should *not* come off.

CHAPTER XIX.

It not unfrequently happens that a design is accomplished without the means and appliances being admissible of explanation or comprehension, not only to the disinterested spectator of the handicraft, but even to the artificer himself; "You've been and done it!" was one of the popular cries in town and in country, and, indeed, may still occasionally be heard by way of revival.

"*How* have I been and done it?" is the general interrogatory reply to this accusation. "Never mind," for the most part forms the rejoinder, "you'll find out."

Exactly so. "You'll find out," and with this dark, hidden, mysterious admonition the accused revolves within his inward man the what, the when, and the where, until the whole becomes hashed into such a puzzle that his brain labours with a monster, and an incubus sits grinning in the form of a mis-shapen hump between his shoulders, mocking his fears and shaking his nervous system beyond the remedy of narcotic influence.

But this is not the only way of doing a deed in the dark. As "the wish is often father to the thought," so is this said wish often the immediate progenitor of the act, without the link of the thinking division. In this case—there being no thought in the matter—an end is jumped to—after the fashion that Lord Brougham gained the woolsack—without the exercise of that mental image called an idea, and to inquire *how* it was managed, would, of course, beget this reply, or to the like effect, "I've been and done it, but don't know how."

Now this was precisely the state and condition of the Emperor as he found himself in the presence of the Marquis D'Horsay, armed with that deadly—deadly at least to the animal spirits—weapon, a copy of a writ. There he stood; but like that celebrated fly discovered embalmed in amber, the way of obtaining admittance therein no mortal, however philosophical and subtle-brained, could or will unriddle or devise. Whether it was by the chimney, door, key-hole, window, crack, chink, or crevice, no one—not even himself—could tell. Sufficient for his purpose, and sufficient for our history, that there he was.

Our hero was, at the moment of becoming sensible of the presence of some one, or something more than himself and his shadow, perusing a paragraph in the '*Morning Post*,' penned by and concerning himself. The Marquis started, and his cheek even blanched at perceiving the scraggy, phantom-looking impersonated circumstance—for he believed for the nonce that his brain was wandering—before him, stretching forth that elongated document with its skinny hands and grimy nails.

"And who are you?" faltered the Marquis, beginning to suspect that the figure before him was so far material that

Diogenes would have rebuked him for standing between the sun and himself. "I say, who are you, and how came you here?" asked our hero.

"It matters not who I am," replied the Emperor, "and how I came here," continued he, "I either can't or won't tell. You may take either for an answer, and select that which pleases you the most or displeases you the least."

"Who do you come from?" inquired the Marquis, decidedly at fault with his mysterious visitor.

"One not altogether unknown to fame," returned the Emperor. "Shallow, of Henrietta street, Covent garden."

"And how the deuce did you gain admittance from him?" passionately inquired the Marquis.

"You have had my answer to that question already," rejoined the unwelcome intruder, as cool as a lemon ice in August.

"I'll dismiss——"

"No one, sir, on account of this," added the Emperor, "I hope. The sharpest watch dog could not have prevented my entrance."

"Have you an invisible coat of mail, then?" asked the Marquis.

"I soon shall have," replied the visitor, looking at the many rents and darns in his rusty brown cloak. "The truth is," continued he, "no one could have served you with process but me. I said that I *could* do it, and I have kept my word. Seek not to learn the means, for those you never can."

"I thought that my precautions were absolute security," soliloquized the Marquis, receiving the writ with a lip and nose curled with mingled disgust and mortification.

"There are exceptions to all rules," rejoined the Emperor, "and I have proved to be one in yours."

"For nine thousand!" exclaimed the Marquis, perusing the writ. "If taken upon this, I'm a target for the insolvent commissioners, or a gentleman curtailed of his liberty for life."

"You can neither afford one nor the other," returned the Emperor. "A man, however he may be blown upon for being in difficulties, so long as he keeps out of the Bench and the air of Portugal street, can hold his head up on Sunday, and such-like privileged days or times when he chooses to run the risk of being hummed. But," continued he, "when once he has been

a prison bird, his bright plumage is dimmed then and dimmed for ever. No no, Marquis, you must and *can* arrange this trifle to better advantage."

"Pray be seated," added the Marquis, in his superlatively polite and winning manner, while a new light seemed to break through the thick and misty veil of his doubts and fears. "I think you said something about that pleasant meet-me-by-half-way measure arrangement," he continued, as his visitor found himself resting on and in the cushions of an easy reclining chair, facing the Marquis, with the barrier of the breakfast table only between them.

"I did," replied the Emperor.

"And in what form do you mean?" inquired the Marquis. "But pardon me," he continued, "a little refreshment of some kind would be agreeable, perhaps?"

"I thank you," returned his visitor. "A glass of brandy would be pleasant after my walk."

Quickly the fiery distillation was procured, and as quickly disposed of by the Emperor.

"You see," continued he, smacking his lips, and using the corner of his cloak for a napkin. "You see," he repeated, "that every man has his price. Now I have mine, and, although rather a high one, yet the value of a thing is in proportion to what it will fetch or bring."

"Certainly, most certainly," acquiesced the Marquis.

"Very good," replied the Emperor. "Then we don't disagree in that particular."

"No one could, with so much reason in the assertion," rejoined the Marquis.

"Then hark ye, Marquis," said his visitor, "I can—and *you* will not doubt it—wriggle myself into the presence of any one. He may be more cautious than a rat, more cunning than a monkey, more wary than a fox, and yet I'd circumvent him."

"Some men are singularly gifted," replied the Marquis.

"They are," added the Emperor, "and the word 'gift' expresses the talent to the letter. We have heard of the calculating boy, the double-sighted boy, and many wonders of the kind who possess strange powers without being able either to transfer them to others or to explain how they possess them themselves. These are properly called 'gifts,' and in the like manner I possess the

gift of gaining admittance where and to whom I am inclined to see, or my interests lead me."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Marquis, beginning to regard his visitor in a supernatural light.

"Ay," replied he, "neither walls, doors, bars, grates, or bolts, can stop me."

"Upon my life!" ejaculated our hero, "you must be Asmodeus."

"No," rejoined the Emperor. "Of the dirt I am especially dirty, and yet such is the power that I wield."

"But I am sure," added the Marquis, leaning forwards and smiling in a not-to-be-resisted way, "you will exercise it mercifully."

"That depends on the bait wherewith to catch it, Marquis," replied his visitor. "I'm not to be caught with chaff."

"No, no, no," rejoined the Marquis, producing a sudden and very different change in his manner. "Certainly not. Plain, candid honesty is the only way that we will deal together."

"Well said," returned the Emperor. "Then now we'll come to points."

"Sharp and as quick as you please," replied the complacent Marquis.

"With your caution and *precaution*," returned the Emperor, "the chances are a hundred to one in your favour of not being bummed unless through my instrumentality. Buy me, and you are safe."

"Egad!" exclaimed our hero. "Egad!" repeated he, crossing his legs and rubbing his white hands with satisfaction, "this savours, and savours only, of honesty. Then, upon our coming to terms," he continued, "you'll withdraw that elongated strip of ill-favoured paper now between your fingers?"

"It has'nt been served yet," replied the Emperor, leering out of the corners of his eyes. "I couldn't make an affidavit of service without having touched the person and very body with the writ."

"What a remarkably finished and accomplished diplomatist you would make," rejoined the Marquis. "Pray, name your terms for withdrawing that offending document from my sight, and, whatever they may be, still consider me your debtor."

"But one that must meet his promises better than his promis-

sory notes," returned the Emperor, filling his glass again with brandy and drinking it with that abrupt jerk which none but a practised tipler can perform without the risk of instantaneous suffocation.

"You need entertain no fear concerning my engagements to you," said the Marquis.

"No," added his visitor, "that I believe. For you would soon find me at your elbow to remind you of the defalcation."

"And now, without further parley," observed our hero, "what do you expect in return for your passive amicability instead of your active hostility?"

"I'll be moderate," replied the Emperor; "for it is no policy of mine either to cut up the goose or to squeeze it beyond the power of its spine."

"A very wise resolve," said the Marquis.

"You see," continued his visitor, "I am paid for these kind of jobs, and a man always feels greater satisfaction in being paid for doing his duty than in being *over*-paid for *not* doing it."

"When the spirit of honesty predominates over the generally stronger distillation of dishonesty," observed the Marquis, by way of parenthesis.

"Well! that may be the case with me," replied the Emperor. "But what I wish to impress upon your mind," continued he, "is, that I must, in order to make good the deficiency concerning the qualms of conscience, be more liberally dealt with for abstaining from performing my services than in——"

"I comprehend you to the nicest possible imaginary shade," interrupted the Marquis, "and such refined sentiments do credit to your heart."

"And you will remember," resumed the Emperor, "that, provided you continue to observe the complete and perfect preventives against the admission of the emissaries of John Doe and Richard Roe, no one and nothing can reach you, *excepting me*, and my visit will be merely an occasional one to let you know that the sum I must periodically receive is justly my due."

"I shall be almost glad to see you," replied the Marquis, "provided you do not appear too suddenly so as to discompose my nerves." The Emperor grinned, but more like a mortal than one of those things through which the wind can blow and the light of the moon stream without impediment.

“And what sum do you require for this essential abandonment of your pursuits to ensure my happiness?” asked the Marquis.

“You’ll not consider ten pounds a month too much?” said his visitor.

“Not one shilling,” replied the Marquis, “and let me request of you to accept the first payment in advance,” continued he, taking from his pocket-case a clean, crisp note with a broad “Ten” flourished upon its silver surface.

“I accept it with thanks,” rejoined the Emperor, “and now you may deem yourself as securely fortified as the shelled tortoise.”

“The reflection will prove extremely consoling,” returned our hero, and while speaking he glanced for a moment out of the window, at some object catching his attention, and when he turned to again address the Emperor he was gone—how he knew not.

CHAPTER XX.

It has been remarked somewhere, and, of course, by somebody—perchance by us in a foregoing page of these chronicles—that different pursuits are creative of different tastes and affections, and yet each is followed by its votaries with little variation from his fellow. Thus we find lawyers’ clerks collectively strangely devoted to gin-and-water and private theatricals. Drivers and conductors of omnibuses are proverbial—without exceptions—for the pleasure they derive in risking and putting in imminent danger the lives and limbs of the inoffensive public, and abusing them in superlative “Billingsgate” for the slightest imaginary affront, and, indeed, if this be wanting, for none at all, when “i’ the vein” for giving a touch of their quality. Tailors and shoemakers are celebrated for the zest and relish they feel in thrashing their better halves. And so we might proceed in tracing the peculiar inclinations of the *genus homo* throughout the multitude of links in the chain of that crowning crust in the animal creation, had our space and patience scope withal to lend us the necessary assistance for the task. But neither the one nor the other is a volunteer, and therefore we must e’en cut our yarn according to our paper.

It may not be generally known that those slender-limbed

creatures who skip, whirl, jump, twirl, and dazzle the eye with "the poetry of motion," at the footlights of the stage, bearing the title of *figurantes*, are especially inclined to excursions to rural spots, such as Richmond, Greenwich, Windsor, and places of the kind within a pleasant drive of the great metropolis, for the no less pleasant purpose of enjoying a dinner, concerning which expense is an object totally disregarded. This may seem a singular propensity on the part of these ladies of the leg and slipper ; but such it is, and scarcely one but makes a subject of boast, in scenes behind the scenes, concerning the elegance and lavish expenditure bestowed upon her last—why should we hesitate to write the word ?—"spree."

As a matter of course, moralists will continue to draw down their lips, look over their spectacles, shake their heads, and feel as if a glass of hot brandy and water would be of considerable relief to their inward feelings—we remember (kind subscriber, pardon the parenthesis) a bright exhalation as if of yesterday, but now gone to that bourne from which no commercial traveller has found his way back, who invariably described this sensibility as his "in'ards." We say that mouldy and grey, grim and rickety framers of the moral codes by which starched society is kept upon its perpendicular, will feel that an act of parliament should at once be passed to prevent these suburban rollickings. It may be so ; but we hazard the opinion that not one of the present ministers would be inclined to bring in a bill ; and if we are to believe the whisperings of days gone by, there were votaries of Cupid in the late cabinet too ardently devoted to his lures to be instrumental in breaking the meshes of his web. However, pass we on. Things as they are have we to deal with—not as they ought to be.

Now Clara—yes, Clara is a pretty name, and it will suit our purpose better than one in closer proximity to that which her godfathers and godmothers bestowed upon her at her baptism—was one of those wasp-waisted, captivating nymphs who catch hearts in abundance with their heels, and open the purse-strings of their adorers with the yawning lift of a floodgate. Clara was fond of anything that came under the head of extensively dear—we mean expensive—and from an ounce of strawberries at Christmas to a tiara of diamonds from Storr and Mortimer's, Clara was not only open to the offer, but ready and willing to

finger the gift. She was partial—in truth, strangely fond of dining, supping, or partaking of refreshments under any head or form that could be served up *on silver*. That was the *sine qua non*. Invite Clara to coffee, and she would refuse.

It happened, under one of those strange phases of the moon that men's wits are thick, and many circumstances turn them to the contrary, that the Marquis D'Horsay had made an excursion to the neighbourhood of Windsor, accompanied by Clara, to enjoy—in spite of the danger of encountering Messrs Grab and Co.—the ease of comparative freedom. And all things were as easy as old slippers. Our hero's boots were easy, and that was a *great* comfort. Their conversation was easy, and their entire ways, manners, and means were quite of the same order. Under such circumstances Time spins his woof with the speed of light. The evening was spent, and so was the night, and the morning waned, and yet it seemed as no one stage had passed; and whether, at the precise moment of becoming conscious of the state of the hours, it was considered to be too late or too early for a return, is not quite a matter of certainty, but the policy of making “another day of it” was agreed upon, as being indispensable for the comfort and, perhaps, utility of the measure. Thus it was, that in a stroll, after a late *dejeuné*, the Queen of the Chase had dropped so inopportunately upon them in a moment of rest.

Then why describe Clara as “a daisy-mead daughter” and “pride of the village?”

In such a character have we seen her drawing innumerable glasses to a common centre, decked in flowers and a confusion of folds of gauze scarcely secreting that particular part of the leg whereon the fastening of the stocking is generally clasped, and smiling and making others smile to see her *pirouette* as the star of the *ballet*. This is our plea of justification.

It was Saturday night, and the Opera house was crammed from pit to dome. The hour of midnight had also struck, and therefore, strictly speaking, we should have said that it was Sunday morning. This, however, would have sounded unenphonious and almost uncharitable, and therefore we still adhere to our first description of the measure of duration. The hour of safety having arrived, the Marquis D'Horsay entered the omnibus box, and exposed his white waistcoat to the house without a fear or tremor in his breast.

"Ah! How do?" exclaimed and inquired Sir George Woomwill, as our hero entered.

"Well—very well," replied the Marquis.

"It is quite refreshing to see you," observed Lord Theophilus Fitzgordin, shaking him by the hand. "This spot, like the park, seems to be—egad! I *hate* the place without you're to be seen."

"So do I," returned Captain Mac, the handsomest captain of the age. "So do I," repeated he.

"Accept my best thanks for your complimentary greetings," added the Marquis, sweeping the circles with his glass, and saluting with the tips of his gloved fingers those who shared the honour of his acquaintance.

"Grisi eclipsed herself to-night," remarked Sir George. "You lost a treat."

"And one that I am likely to continue to lose," returned our hero, smiling, "unless the time be altered to a later hour."

"He, he, he!" tittered Sir George. "That's remarkably facetious."

"But you're in time for Clara's triumphant *début* in the new ballet," said Lord Theophilus.

"I intended to be," quietly replied the Marquis.

"I should imagine," from the wreaths and bouquets I see prepared," observed Sir George, "that flowers had considerably risen in value."

"I have brought a few which will please her the most, I'd venture long odds," replied the Marquis.

"No doubt, no doubt," rejoined Sir George, showing every tooth within his capacity to exhibit.

"And where is this choice collection of exotics?" inquired Captain Mac.

"Here," returned our hero, taking from one of his waistcoat pockets a dozen or so of withered daisies. The production caused at first looks of surprise; but after a few seconds for the hatching of his wit, Sir George exclaimed, "By my honour I'll be sworn! they're the reminiscences of a delightfully quiet day in a delicious country retreat."

"Ever thus, ever thus!" ejaculated Lord Theophilus. "No one stands a chance with ye."

"Chesterlane was frantic with hope," remarked Captain Mac.

"He dwells too long upon his hopes for his actions to be successful," replied the Marquis.

"You're right," returned Sir George. "In such matters men should be quick, sudden, abrupt."

"Your experience has taught you this," added the captain.

"Yes," said Sir George. "Quickness of pursuit tends to quickness of capture."

"Or to as positive a loss," replied the Marquis. "Where one of the sex, so sweetly fair, is run down, a hundred are decoyed by gentle measures."

At this moment Clara, the goddess of the hour, came bounding on the stage, amid a thousand plaudits, like a gambolling antelope.

"*Brava! Bravissima!*"

Now she swept in rapid circles as if poised in air and suspended by invisible thread. There was no exertion; but as she floated from right to left—now here, now there—nothing but a body of less specific gravity than a spider's film could have exceeded that swimming in the breathing element.

Cheer awoke cheer, and doubled and redoubled the enthusiasm on account of the successful efforts of the graceful Clara. But the crowning one of all was yet to be displayed. Like a bird rising perpendicularly from the ground, she lifted, rather than sprung herself upwards, and then, as when stooping from a towering height, she skimmed without an effort to the footlights and rested motionless on the extreme ends of her toes, the burst of applause and showers of wreaths and bouquets were all but sufficient, even in the exorbitant Clara's estimation, for her exertions.

Panting, she bent to the admiring throng, and pressed the collected mass of flowers to her heaving bosom, with smiles portraying the flattered gratification that she felt. But when she turned to the omnibus box and saw the little cluster of dried daisies thrown at her feet, Clara could not control her risible muscles, and skipped away with a laugh that was distinctly heard in the first row of the pit.

The companions of the Marquis enjoyed this joke amazingly, and it was some few minutes before any part of speech was mingled with its chorus.

"Has Chesterlane been here to-night?" at length inquired the Marquis.

"Yes," replied Sir George. "He was here during the opera."

"We are to meet him at Crocky's by-an'-by," said Lord Theophilus.

"And in what way is he whiling away the time between this and then?" asked the Marquis.

"That is singularly doubtful," returned the captain.

"Did he not say?"

"No," replied Captain Mac. "He made no confession to us."

"I'd bet a hundred—a cool, pleasant hundred," said Sir George, "that he's behind, teaching the girls a few lessons concerning innocence."

"If I thought that," replied the Marquis, "I should be loth to interrupt such a praiseworthy proceeding."

"Considering the plenitude of those they receive in the opposite course of tuition," rejoined Sir George, "it would be, indeed"—and the Baronet coughed, drew up the ends of his shirt collar, and pressed a patch upon his favourite pimple—"an interruption to a remarkable course," continued he, "of simplicity and purity which, for the singularity in the head of the fountain, alone deserves and merits our non-interference to more than a reasonable extent."

"Hear, hear!" cheered his larger shadow, Lord Theophilus.

"But I cannot deny myself the pleasure of witnessing the progress of Tom's labours," returned the Marquis, "and therefore shall proceed to the scenes of his meritorious work."

"Do not leave us," said Captain Mac. "Really, in the name of the public, I must intercede for your prolonged presence. The leader of the world of *ton* is so chary of his countenance, that——"

"By my life it's against my will!" replied the Marquis.

"Whatever may be the cause," rejoined the Captain, "the effect is the same. We are in despair."

"Ha, ha!" laughed our hero. "If such were really the truth, and your imagination had no hand or help in varnishing the statement, I should be in hopes of 'a liberty and annuity fund.'"

"Capital!" exclaimed Sir George, "The subscriptions would be large, I am sure."

"If you were to cap," replied our hero, "in the crush-room, and Tom would mount his Spanish charger, and do a corresponding friendly action in the park, I have no hesitation in saying that my religious opinion concentrates itself into the lozenge of conviction that not only my debts could be paid in full, but that a provision would be insured for the remainder of my declining years."

"Don't, pray don't harrow my feelings with such pathos," returned Sir George, burying his highly-coloured cheeks in the finest cambric handkerchief that ever dusted rouge. "I detest," continued he, "the remotest allusion to declining years. It puts one so forcibly in mind of fading and becoming ugly."

"But the truth, George, the truth," added the Marquis, "should be, like our sins and transgressions, ever before us."

"By Beauty's door of glass!" exclaimed Sir George, "if that was our only mirror, how hideous would be the reflections."

"Come, come!" replied Lord Theophilus. "What a set of prosy dogs we are."

"I was just thinking so," replied the Marquis. "And as I always avoid prosy dogs, pardon my taking my leave. *Adieu, au revoir.*"

"*Resté,*" replied Sir George. "You'll meet us at the club?"

"I will," shortly rejoined the Marquis, leaving the box and making his way behind the scenes with an intention of using his privilege to visit, at his pleasure, the captivating Clara in her dressing-room. Towards it he approached, with confidence in his footstep, and giving a gentle tap at the door by way of announcement of his intended entrance, he was not a little surprised to find the barrier locked and bolted.

"Clara!" said the Marquis in a subdued voice. "Clara, it is only me."

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed a voice.

"Hush!" whispered a second.

This was exceedingly mysterious, and so our hero thought.

"Clara," repeated the Marquis, "let the door be opened."

"It is impossible, *mon cher ami,*" replied Clara through the keyhole. "I am disrobed."

"Faugh!" exclaimed the Marquis, "*that* can be no reason."

"Return to de box," rejoined the gentle voice, "and come here after de next *pas de deux*."

"As you please," returned our hero, quitting the door, and having a very strong supposition that there was a rehearsal in private of the *pas* described.

"But the Marquis was no eavesdropper—no Paul Pry—and he turned to leave the locality without the remotest intention of either having his suspicions confirmed or dispelled. Chance, however, decided to the contrary.

"Have you seen Chesterlane here?" asked Sir George, making his appearance as if forespent with speed.

"No," replied the Marquis. "He is not behind the scenes."

"The Countess wishes to speak to him immediately," rejoined Sir George, "and the door-keeper says that he has not passed out."

"And he spoke in strict accordance with the fact," returned the object of their remarks, standing before them.

"I've been seeking you everywhere," said Sir George. "The Countess desires to see you before she leaves, and she wishes to leave directly."

"May I trespass upon your kindness to say that I'll attend her with more than convenient speed," replied his lordship, and away the bearer sped to convey, with gallant haste, the message.

"Where have you been hiding, Tom?" inquired the Marquis.

"Mum!" returned his friend, raising his finger to his lip.

"Eh?" briefly exclaimed our hero, with a chaos of conflicting thoughts vibrating through his brain, and even his nether lip trembled and twitched.

"May I never be baulked in a good intention again!" ejaculated the Earl, "but you're a disturber of a man's happiness and peace."

"You, you, you——"

"Yes I was," rejoined his friend. "Precisely so," continued he; "and for the future beware how you disturb a friend at his devotions."

CHAPTER XXI.

To climb is the fixed purpose of that strangely formed and forked animal man, from the sweep to the first lord of the treasury. Few, indeed, and there should be but few, who have no goal to reach in the race of life, and when gained, but what are ready to girt their loins and to start anew. In the course, however, there are many stumbling blocks, rolling stones, blind holes, and pits, and when the leading competitor seems to be heading the rut, sweeping in his wake, down he goes at one fell swoop, and often the last is the first; for "the race is not to the swift."

Now it so happened that this metaphor applied with singular accuracy to a few intimate associates of Bosky Tom. They, like himself, were aspirants for fame—certainly of a *quasi* character—and fortune by somewhat doubtful paths for distinction, and equally uncertain in their net profits. Horse chanting, proprietorships of pandemoniums, swindling, and corresponding means to an end, have their drawbacks like other virtues. Among them may be enumerated solitary imprisonment, transportation, and "months at the mill."

The lion caters for the jackal, the shark for the pilot fish, the debtor for the lawyer, and the hell-keeper, not unfrequently, has to throw a sop to the informer. This last mentioned hungry animal is occasionally so voracious for his unbounded stomach, that it becomes a matter of expediency to refuse his demand for his gaping and distended jaws, and to defy his malice rather than to purchase his good will at such a high and extravagant premium. Such had been the policy of Messrs Bosky Tom and Co. with an information lately laid against the thriving establishment of the Strangers. The result was, that the partners found themselves, one remarkably fine morning, standing cheek-by-jowl, in a small division of a court in the vicinity of the Old Bailey, arraigned for keeping a common—"common, ye Gods!" thought Bosky Tom—gaming house. By some hackle or higgie, quirk or quibble, by

which the law has become so remarkably popular for its uncertainty, Bosky Tom was discovered innocent of the soft impeachment, and escaped scot free. Not so, however, his amiable partner enjoying the patronymic of "Bloaty." Whether this distinction was gained from his plethoric habit, or the redundancy of self-importance, which made itself perceptible in every move and gesture of his person, let it be never so trivial, remains a matter as undiscovered as the utility of Captain Ross's expedition to where the north pole ought to have been ; but it is sufficient for our records that "Bloaty" was his name.

Bloaty's back was scarcely less broad than that of the far-famed Daniel Lambert, and was well constructed for the pressure of sins and charges. Like a porter's knot, they found a pedestal strong and sturdy, and when an enlightened jury stigmatized him with the guilt of "keeping a common gaming-house," Bloaty shook his shoulders with the ease that a maid would trundle a mop, and seemed to regard the verdict as if it possessed the specific gravity only of a piece of thistle-down. The sentence quickly followed the unanimous "guilty," and this was a total abstinence from horse-exercise in Hyde-park, or a saunter in Bond-street, with a strict regimen upon gruel, soup, and periodical treats of butchers' meat, and a temporary sojourn in Coldbath fields.

"It's a beautiful day," soliloquized Bosky Tom, the morning after his escape from participating in the drawbacks of the establishment now being endured by his partner, "and so I'll take a drive over and see how Bloaty feels in his new quarters." "Upon my life," continued he, "if they keep him as they did me in similar circumstances, what a skeleton he'll become. He'll miss his wine—his port wine—dreadfully."

At the conclusion of this remark Bosky Tom rang the bell and ordered the servant answering the summons "to desire Jim to bring round——"

"The saddle oss, sir?" inquired the obsequious flunky.

"I think not," replied his master, scratching the tip of his nose in doubtful decision.

"The buggy, sir?"

"Humph!" rejoined Bosky Tom, surveying with pride the faultless shape of his pump-soled patent boots. "I think not," he continued, still hesitating upon the form of his conveyance.

"Cab, sir?" again asked the servant; for he knew that his master was well pleased to hear the various equipages that he owned enumerated.

"No," returned Bosky Tom, drawing from a pocket a highly scented handkerchief, and dusting a speck from his finished boot, "I'll have the phaeton."

"Very good, sir," added the flunky, and away he hastened to fulfil the order.

In a few minutes—for, like all great men, Bosky Tom had no patience to wait—his dashing phaeton was at the door, and scarcely had the high-conditioned horses time to paw their fretfulness, when they were spanking along towards the dreary abode of Bloaty.

Communications with visitors to prisoners of the general order are greatly impeded and rendered far from being so pleasant and confidential as they otherwise might be, from a double barrier of stiff iron-work separating them, while a turnkey sits or stands, in accordance with his inclination, as a kind of Cerberus, in the unoccupied space. But Bosky Tom was not a common visitor; neither was Bloaty one of the common order of prisoners. Both possessed the wherewithal to command the respect even of turnkeys, and such like professional underlings of the law whose sympathies are remarkably dull and difficult to awaken.

With a golden key Bosky Tom essayed to unlock the small store of civility in the secure keeping of the official answering his summons at the outer gate, and the attempt proving eminently successful, the same means were repeated, and without let, check, or stop, he soon found himself in the small white-washed cell containing the person of the desponding Bloaty.

Oh, what a falling off was there! Where were now Bloaty's gibes and jeers? Where the self-important air and bearing? Where the roll, the swagger, and the strut? All, all had passed and gone, like the baseless fabric of a vision. There he sat upon the edge of his iron bedstead, dressed in that sombre livery of the culprit so disparaging to the appearance of the wearer, with his chubby face buried between his chubby hands, and groaning inwardly in the spirit.

"What, my heart of oak!" hallooed his visitor, "how are ye?"

"Oh, Tom!" replied the unhappy prisoner, "I'm very glad to see ye; very glad."

"Why you look a little down upon your luck," rejoined Bosky Tom.

"Down!" repeated Bloaty, turning his eyes upwards with the air of a martyr, "I little thought what it was to be lagged in such a place as this."

"Keep up your spirits, old chap," returned his partner, "your time will be nicely up for the Doncaster meeting."

"I shall never come out except as suet," added Bloaty, becoming more sentimental momentarily, "unless I'm allowed my daily whack of port wine."

"It's against the rules, sir," replied the turnkey, "unless you get upon the sick list of the infirmary."

"But I *am* sick," rejoined Bloaty; "heartily sick," continued he; "sick at heart, and particularly sick at the stomach."

"I'm afraid our doctor wouldn't pass you," observed the turnkey.

"So am I," returned the prisoner, "and that's the worst part of the business. If I could only get invalided, and might lie a-bed as much as I liked, with a fair allowance of port wine and good soup, the time might pass rather agreeable than otherwise."

"Couldn't you manage to let him have a few glasses on the sly now and then?" inquired Bosky Tom; "we'd tip for it liberally."

"If the gentleman wouldn't mind drinking it out of a pewter-pot," replied the turnkey, "perhaps it might be managed."

"I'd drink it out of any pot," rejoined Bloaty, "of any kind, size, or sort."

"There, my old grim and doleful," returned his visitor, "now you'll sing comic songs, I expect."

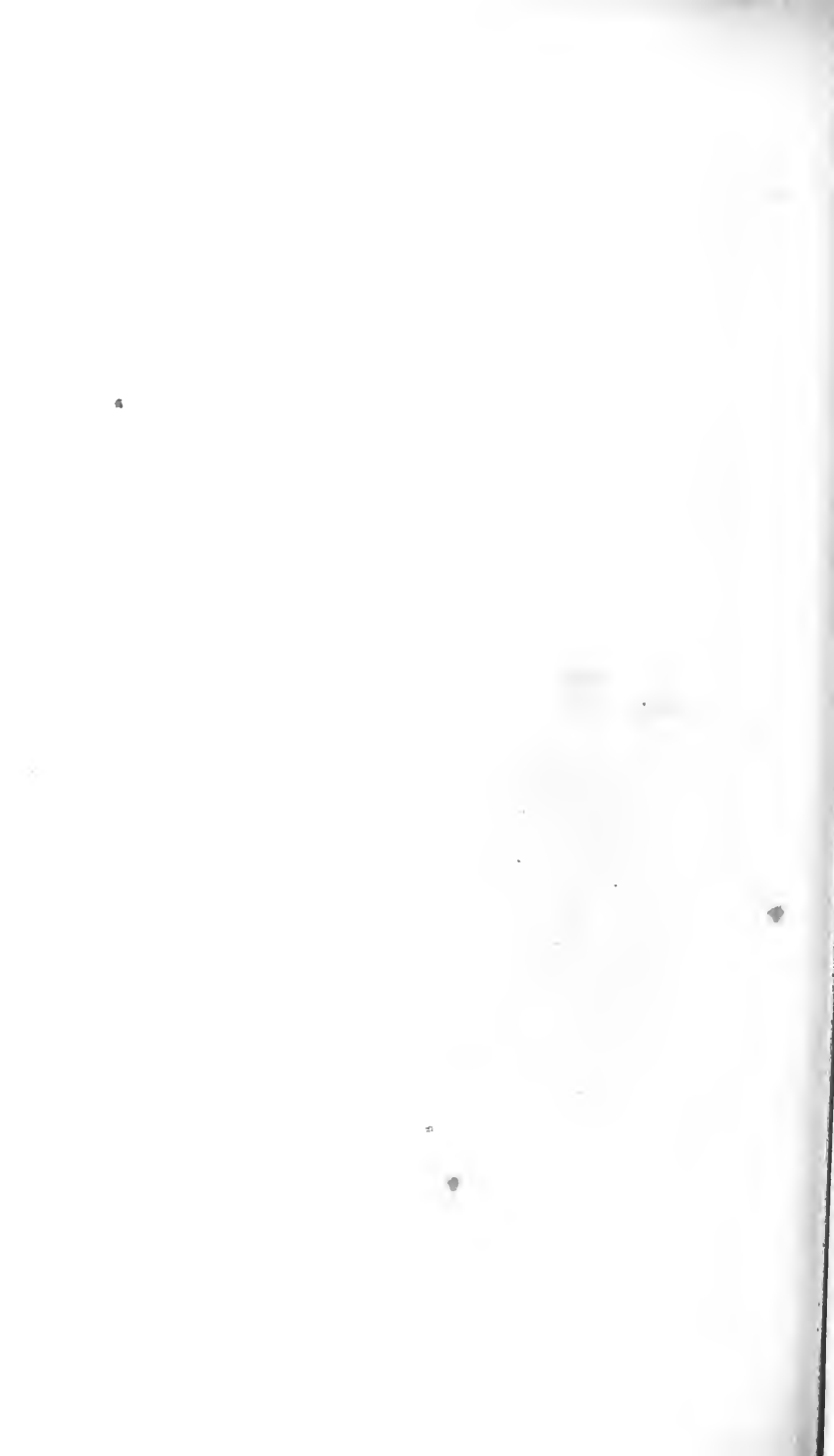
"I shall feel more resigned certainly," said the prisoner, in a manner refreshed. "But tell me," he continued, changing the subject, "did the bank get a good pull last night?"

"A famous one," replied Bosky Tom. A couple of nice fresh pigeons dropped in like very shy birds; but we nursed 'em tenderly, and so gently, that every feather was drawn with the same skill that a celebrated tooth-drawer once displayed."

"How was that?" asked Bloaty.

"He drew every grinder out of a chap's jaws," responded his





partner, "with so much comfort that he asked when he was going to begin."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Bloaty, "and that was the way you eased the greenhorns, eh?"

"Yes," said his visitor, "they were plucked clean quite unawares."

"To what melody?" inquired Bloaty.

"To the tune of five cool hundreds," replied his visitor.

"And very neat profits, too," rejoined the prisoner. "It would have done my digestive organs service to have witnessed the pulling in of the swag; but here I was," continued he, "moping like a toad in a well."

"But the time will soon pass," returned Bosky Tom. "Keep up your steam."

"I can now," added Bloaty. "Port wine's a wonderful fan to my pluck."

"I shall come and see ye very often," said Bosky Tom, giving his partner a squeeze of the hand.

"Ay," replied Bloaty, "I expect ye to do that. Remember, I am suffering for the firm, like a partner does now and then in other establishments, by taking upon himself the responsibilities and white-washing his mates."

"It shall not be forgotten," rejoined his visitor, "and now, good bye."

Upon Bosky Tom's taking his departure from the cell, he requested the turnkey to shew him the treadmill—perhaps old associations dictated the desire.

Scarcely had he entered the court wherein the mill was being turned by a gang of climbing but never rising sinners, when his eye fell upon a familiar form. Sadly changed, sadly altered was, indeed, the outward and the inward man of Knowing Harry; but there he stepped, in measured tread, a victim in his own conceit.

Bosky Tom was not in any way astonished at the position his *quondam* friend now occupied in society; but the sight was unexpected, and for a few moments he remained watching the progress of his labours at the mill in silence.

At length he inquired whether "he could speak to the man working third from the end nearest to him."

"He 'll come off directly," replied the turnkey, "and then you may say a few words to him, but not many. The silent system's adopted here."

"I'll not occupy a minute," rejoined Bosky Tom.

Upon the descent of Knowing Harry, he started with surprise to see his more fortunate and successful acquaintance approaching him.

"Why, what's this about, eh?" inquired he. "I never heard of your lodgings here."

"Ah, Tom!" sighed Knowing Harry. "My hopes are all eat's meat."

"So we often think when down upon our luck," replied Bosky Tom, with the charitable intention of offering consolation to the afflicted.

"I never expected this return for a hard-spent life," whimpered the prostrate Harry.

"Never say die," rejoined Bosky Tom. "What brought you here?"

"Misplaced confidence," replied Knowing Harry.

"What do you mean?" returned Bosky Tom. "Your patter is too fine for me."

"A pal peached," added Knowing Harry, in a tone of lamentation. "We were doing a nice little snug trade in the endeavour to ease a chap of his superfluous property, which the beaks have since called swindling, when a pal, who wasn't exactly satisfied with his share of the swag, blew the gaff, and here *I am*."

"Well!" said his friend, "what can't be avoided must be endured. But take a piece of advice from me—I'll give it ye, although I once got a good premium for it."

"What's that?" asked Knowing Harry.

"Take the side," replied his visitor, pointing to the mill, "take the side," repeated he, "*next the wall*."

CHAPTER XXII.

"IT becomes now," said the Marquis D'Horsay, communing with himself in the dead hour of a soft and stilly night, when repose was courting the eyelids of his bootblack, and yet denied him the solace of his poppy syrup, "it becomes now a question of what I am to do. To be or not to be doesn't, in my case, appear to be the alternative. I *must* be in some form, shape, or condition. A

Smith, a Johnson, a Snooks, or a common order of circumstances bearing a similar want of identity in the throng, can see his name in print under Police reports, Insolvent Debtor's Court, Outlawry, and such like damping heads to interesting details and paragraphs, without a blush for the effect. He knows that, like a speck of soot from a blazing chimney, it will be lost in the density of the smoke before an eye can detect its whereabouts. But it is a very different affair with one who, let him seek a cranny in any of the four corners of the earth, and yet the detecting eye of curiosity shall discover his refuge. "Yes," continued the Marquis, "it was the desire of my life in its commencement to become distinguished. With this end in view I thought of nothing but the means of its attainment, no matter at what sacrifice. Talents—yes, and it's no vanity to say or to think so—were sacrificed to unworthy purposes, and now in the hour of need I feel and know that they *have* been sacrificed. To dazzle was my object, not to command respect; and thus, when no longer capable of fitting in my paint (Heaven is witness how abruptly truth will out upon occasions!) and tinsel, admiration is turned into contempt, and where one laments my downfall a thousand makes it a subject of exultation."

These were bitter reflections for the Marquis D'Horsay; but still he seemed to be in no way disposed to cast them from his thoughts.

"And now," continued he, "when I would turn to any barren spot for seclusion, not one presents itself for a haven of rest. Let me go where I will, 'that's him' would ring in my ears. New Zealand, Van Diemen's Land, and the back woods of America even afford no hope of retreat. I would escape from myself, like one frightened at his own shadow, and yet go where I will the phantom must follow. "Distinction, I hate ye!" exclaimed our hero springing from his chair with melo-dramatic effect, and, as the lamp burned dimly upon the table, the whole scene was particularly striking.

"With what care," continued the Marquis, pacing up and down the apartment, "some men beget their own miseries, and I'm a miserable example of the fruitless labourer. My resources exhausted to the last sixpence, my friends wearied of patching up a tumbling credit, and now dependent, entirely dependent, on the generosity of one who has greater cause than all or any to be tired

of the ceaseless drag upon her purse and patience. And yet there seems to be no remedy. With numbers it is a matter of policy to undergo a temporary inconvenience and trouble for some ultimate benefit. Thus they submit with resignation to prying examinations into their pecuniary matters, and summon their fortitude to bear with the gibes, jeers, and sneers of the victimized, and, if necessary for the ends of their revenge, to the doing of penance behind a screen of bricks and mortar. But in my case there is no such object in view. If I could ——” and the Marquis shook his head, and his lip curled as if something extremely nauseous had touched his palate,—“if I could,” repeated he, “make up my mind to pass through the hot and fiery ordeal, I should be in no way improved in my condition. I have no occupation or pursuit to follow, or be allowed to follow, with advantage like other men. No useful means to apply; but, like a fractured mirror, or an unstrung harp, or a dried fountain, or any thing else of a similar ornamental construction bereft of its attraction, I’m no longer worthy of attention or notice. Confusion’s in the thought!”

At this moment there was a slight tap at the window, as if a pebble had been jerked against it.

The Marquis started at the sound, and threw open the casement; but though the moon was shining brightly, and rendered everything clear for a long distance around, no one was visible within hail but a solitary policeman.

Supposing it to have been but the rustle of a leaf, our hero closed the window again, and resumed his spiritless cogitations.

“Here I am,” continued he, “immured, for aught I can see, for the remainder of my life, unless dragged to some vile hole when stealing a few gasps of wholesome air without. And for what? I’ve *had* my fun, it is true; but am I not paying much too dearly for it? Yes, pay-day has arrived, and with its frightful reality.”

Again the sound was repeated at the window, and as the Marquis hastened to learn the cause, he heard his name whispered softly from behind, and upon turning, he saw the mysterious form of the Emperor in the doorway.”

“What, Asmodeus!” exclaimed the Marquis, “how came you here, and for what, in this dull hour of the night?”

“Say, rather the earliest one of the morning, Marquis,” replied the Emperor.

"Well! no matter the time," rejoined our hero. "Your purpose?"

"To warn ye of danger," returned the Emperor.

"To warn——"

A third sound, sharper than the foregoing, rattled against the panes, and cut short the exclamation of the Marquis.

"Stop," said the Emperor, catching him by the arm, as with a gesture of impatience, the Marquis once more hastened towards the window.

"Why?" briefly inquired he.

"If you open that again," replied the Emperor slowly, "this room will be occupied by more than the present company."

"You must be mistaken," rejoined the Marquis. "The window is eighteen feet from the ground."

"But a light ladder, and that height is easily scaled," returned the Emperor.

"Tell me what you mean?" added the Marquis.

"Shallow is so enraged at not being able to reach ye," replied his visitor, "that, as a last resource, he determined to endeavour to find an entrance himself to-night, bribing me to accompany and assist him in the adventure. The two first stones I jerked against the glass to let us know whether you were up, or had only left the light burning; but the third was his summons."

"Where does he think *you* are?" asked the Marquis.

"Close at hand," responded the Emperor; "but I suggested his making the climb by himself in order that I might have a chance of communicating his design, and——"

"What?" said the Marquis.

"Touching the reward for my faithful services," replied the Emperor, extending an opened hand.

"And you shall have it," rejoined the Marquis, giving him a pinch of gold from a corner of his waistcoat pocket, "and so shall Shallow," continued he; "but in a very different form."

"He deserves to be paid off," returned the Emperor.

"It must be done quickly," added the Marquis thoughtfully, "and I am at a loss for practical jokes."

"Egad!" exclaimed the Emperor, "I'll go and inform the nearest policeman that I saw two men scale the garden wall, and think they're housebreakers."

"A good thought," replied the Marquis. "It will be a famous reprisal to lock Shallow up. He has been the cause of so many losing their liberty."

"Ay, one night in the station-house will do him a service," rejoined the Emperor.

"Be quick," returned the Marquis, as another pebble was jerked against the window, "for he seems to be in a hurry."

"I'll soon return," added the Emperor, leaving for the purpose of foiling one who had so often foiled the purposes of others.

"That it should come to this!" soliloquised the Marquis. "Great heaven! who would take the pains of getting into debt to be thus hunted, driven, and persecuted? Even now, in the depth of the night, to feel no security for a moment's peace or freedom."

"Hilloa, there!" cried a gruff voice, "what are ye about?"

"I'm only"—and then there was a scuffle, and the noise of the fall of a heavy body.

"Oh! oh! oh!"

Whir-r-r, whir-r-r-r, went a rattle; clump, clump, clump, followed some heavy footsteps, and then voices were mingled, challenging each other.

"I'm a gentleman," gasped some one in a dismal tone, "I'm a gentleman by act of parliament, third and fourth of George the Second, chapter the sixth, I think it is."

"Grab his tools, Bill," returned another. "I dare say you'll find a Jemmy——"

"I'm a Sammy," interrupted the distressed. "Mrs S. at least," continued he, "calls me by that familiar and endearing name."

"What's this noise about?" inquired the Marquis, throwing open the window with confidence. "What this noise about?" repeated he.

"A plant to break into your house, sir," replied a policeman, holding Samuel Shallow by the collar of his coat.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Marquis, with well-feigned surprise.

"No, no, no," replied the discomfited limb and pillar of the law, for the first time in his life appealing to the kindly feeling of his debtor. "It's me, Marquis, Samuel Shallow, of Henrietta street, Covent garden."

"If that be the truth," rejoined the Marquis, "a greater thief was never captured."

"I never heard of him before," returned the policeman, "although I have of Jack Sheppard." "Will you please to come to the station-house with us," added a second official, "to prefer the charge?" "I prefer remaining where I am," said the Marquis, "until the morning. This is no time to prefer charges or any other kind of occupation to sleep."

"We're seen enough for our inspector to detain him, sir, till then."

"Detain me!" exclaimed Mr Samuel Shallow, aghast with horror. "What will Mrs. S. say for the loss of her Sammy?"

"Damn her Sam," replied a rough instrument of the strong arm of the law. "Who cares for Sams, I should like to know?"

"But my dear Marquis," petitioned the unhappy bill-discounting limb of legal robbery, "do explain the mistake under which these respectable individuals are labouring."

"Pooh, pooh!" replied the Marquis, "off with him, constables."

"Come along," growled a functionary, "it's no use chaffing here."

"But I'm a gentleman," expostulated Samuel, hanging back with involuntary reluctance, and permitting his coat collar to be dragged over his ears.

"One of the heavy weights in the light-fingered gentry, I expected," returned the policeman.

"Oh, worthy officer!" exclaimed Mr Shallow, "listen to me, and don't chill my prospects of a night's comfort."

"One would think you were a Methodist parson chirping," added the official. "Come along."

"What will Mrs S. think?" ejaculated the captive. "I'm caught in my own trammels."

"You'll attend, sir, at the station by eight o'clock," said one of the officers.

"Yes, yes," replied the Marquis, "I'll be there in time."

"Oh, Marquis!" exclaimed the prisoner, "this is a sad addition to money out of pocket, let alone the pull of dead interest."

"Dead what?" said the constable, holding him in an iron gripe, as he conducted him from the vicinity.

"Interest," replied Mr Shallow, with the innocence of one who had never calculated its compound fractions, "interest, Mr Policeman."

"He must have had a pal," remarked a brother in arms, shouldering the ladder, and following in their footsteps.

"Yes," replied the captive quickly, "I forgot the Emperor. He'll explain the state of affairs. Emperor, Emperor!"

"I tell ye what it is, my pip," returned the officer, undertaking the duty of his safe custody, "unless you keep a quiet tongue in your head, I'll ram my fist down your throat. Neighbourhoods mustn't be disturbed."

"I'm dumb," added Mr Shallow, with politic philosophy, and yielding himself with forbearance to the mercies of his mistaken captors.

CHAPTER XXIII.

VERY great persons have their levees. Her Majesty—long live the Queen!—has her Wednesday assemblies of the order thus termed, and so has the Speaker—or, more properly speaking, the *most* silent officer within the noisy, turbulent walls of the plebeian representatives of the third and democratic state. Singers and opera dancers, too, have their levees, with all the state of princes of the blood, and a shade more imposing, if there be a difference.

And would it be in keeping with her state that the triumphant Clara should not be thus attended even in her *boudoir* and closet by the adulating throng. No, no. There are hours for public adoration and private worship by the code of all successful divinities of the ballet *corps*, and as times and seasons must be observed by the proselytes of the goddesses described as by those of constellations of a lesser magnitude, Clara ever found herself the focus of a circle wherein the magic centre was within her own power and especial keeping.

It was a pretty, very pretty room. Stealing through a phalanx of choice flowers, the curtained sunshine came struggling through and reflected many a bright ray upon vase and mirror and choice trifle, gem, and article of *vertú*.

Before a speckless glass giving the complete form and plastic figure of the faultless Clara, upon a corner of which a well-fed cupid pointed significantly to the polished surface, she stood with a finger upon her lip telegraphing to Momus. Silence—enchancing, entrancing silence—was illustrated from the point of her pointed





toes to the cherry lip on which her finger was crossed in eloquence truly mute, and yet no less eloquent from its silence.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed the Earl of Chesterlane. "Beautiful! May I never know what it is to see the red and purple a neck in front at the winning-post again; but the Saracen's Head would be in love with ye!"

The Earl little thought of the cause of the divinity's enchanting attitude; but if he had turned reynard's look from the corner of his eyes, or had peeped in the face of the polished surface of the glass, he would have learned a lesson from that iron-bound volume, edited by experience, which a long series of years had failed to inculcate.

The Earl had no guise, none whatever; he regarded an optical delusion as a thing of fact and truth, and believed all men and all things being as they seemed to be. The addition that he was continually surprised at the failure of his hopes can be no more remarkable than the prostration of the lofty ideas of the proprietors of the aerial machine, who, having inflated themselves beyond the bearing of the pressure of the remarkable powers of the gullibility of the public with the corresponding "windy nothing," found practical demonstration far more difficult than the easy designs of architectural theories. Quick as thought, and, perhaps, a few shades quicker, the Marquis D'Horsay receded and obeyed the electrical telegraph of the gentle Clara by causing no more noise than would have raised the eyelids of a watchful mouse.

"Have you been to church?" inquired Clara, lifting her leg some few feet above her head before the mirror, and standing as motionless as a piece of sculptured statuary.

"Oh, yes," replied the Earl, "to be sure I have."

"Dis morning?"

"This morning!" repeated his lordship, in surprise, "God bless my soul, no!"

"When den?" rejoined his fair inquisitor.

"When I was married was the last occasion," returned her companion, "and as far as my memory serves me, the event of my christening was the one preceding."

"Then you shall go dis afternoon," added Clara.

"To church!" exclaimed the Earl. "My dear girl, you must be mad."

"Did you not promise to obey my wishes?" said Clara, skipping before the glass.

"In all unreasonable matters," replied his lordship, "we are bound to yield to every caprice, whim, and folly, from charming woman; but when she becomes a creature of common sense, rebellion becomes indispensable."

"But you should pay your devotions——"

"I *am* paying them," interrupted the Earl, rising from his chair and catching the butterfly of his admiration in his embrace.

"With credit?" archly said the winning Clara.

"And with promises," returned his lordship, "a mode," continued he, "not at all singular in the present day for the defraying of costs and charges."

"Well, well!" added Clara. "To de church or not as in accordance with your inclination. But you must leave me now."

"Nay, nay," expostulated her companion, "I have come to remain the afternoon—until, at least, the park is full."

"But I would be alone, *milor*," returned she.

"It's the sacrifice of time," added the Earl, "for you to be alone."

"Now, go," said Clara, in a truly coaxing and irresistible manner, "I am *so* fatigued, and must rest myself."

"I'll watch while you rest, and be as quiet as that alabaster figure of yourself," replied his lordship.

"It is not me," rejoined Clara.

"If not by design," returned the Earl, "the likeness is striking by accident."

"You flatterer!" added his fair companion. "It is Venus."

"Then the marvel is no longer strange," said his lordship, "for beauty will resemble beauty."

"'Tis very pretty to hear you talk sometimes," replied Clara; "but now I cannot listen longer. You will go like a good boy."

"If you are imperative," rejoined the Earl.

"My will is ever so," returned Clara.

"Then *au revoir*," added his lordship. "I take my leave of you."

"And dere is nothing you could take from me that I would more willing part with," replied the coquettish Clara. But it

must be mentioned here that it was not within the hearing of the Earl. He had taken his departure.

"By my honour, Clara!" exclaimed the Marquis D'Horsay, entering the room somewhat abruptly, "this is too bad. You know how extremely limited are the opportunities I have to call upon ye, and yet——"

"Do not be angry," interrupted Clara. "I got rid of him as expeditiously as pos-seeble."

"But he should not have been allowed to come to-day," rejoined our hero. "Sundays ought to be considered my exclusives."

"He was so extremely pressing to be permitted to see me dis morning," returned Clara, "that I knew not how to refuse after so much generosity"

"Anything that I have not heard of?" inquired the Marquis.

"Yes," replied she, exultingly.

"Diamonds, pearls, or gold?"

"Neither," responded Clara; "but a magnificent service of silver."

"Silver," repeated our hero, "I wonder where Tom got it from. I thought that the jewellers and the silversmiths were long since exhausted."

"It's de family plate melted in de new form," replied Clara. "It was old and ugly he say; but now it is *magnifique*."

"For such liberality," rejoined our hero, "I think you were justified in giving him admittance to my exclusion. Everything has its price."

"It grieve me to keep my handsome pet waiting though," returned Clara, endearingly.

"It certainly is a great drag upon the powers of patience and endurance to stand behind a door waiting for the departure of your rival," added the Marquis.

"Not a rival," added Clara.

"Well! not exactly," replied the Marquis; "but still near enough to create unpleasant associations."

"De heart and de pocket are two ver different emotions," observed his companion.

"And but seldom are united," replied our hero.

"No," rejoined Clara, "that is quite true. And therefore it becomes necessary to enjoy them apart."

"Let us endeavour to forget the dictates of such necessity,"

returned our hero. "Tell me," he continued, "did you create a sensation last night?"

"Beyond my hope," replied she enthusiastically. "De whole house thundered with applause."

"Wreaths as usual, I suppose?"

"Yes," responded Clara, curling her lip with something like disdain; "but every one have de flowers now. They are quite common."

"And therefore have lost their charm?"

"Yes," she replied, "dat which is common I never prize, and dat which is rare is always treasured by me."

"Not an isolated taste, I believe," rejoined our hero.

"Perhaps it may be de cause of my loving you so much, *mon cher* Marquis," returned Clara, in her most winning manner.

"Who taught you the art of complimenting?" he inquired with a laugh.

"I'm paid so many," replied Clara, "dat I must e'en give some away for the sake of charity."

"I wish that I could have witnessed your triumph," said the Marquis.

"Your absence disappointed me sadly," replied his companion. "Why were you not in de omnibus box in time for de ballet?" continued she.

"An engagement prevented."

"An engagement!" repeated Clara, knitting her brow.

"Come, come," returned the Marquis, "no jealousy, sweet Clara."

"Indeed, I think an explanation is my due."

"You shall have it," and, placing his lips to her mouth, he whispered a few words that seemed to create no small degree of merriment to the listener and to the narrator; but it was well that a third ear was not within reach of the suppressed voice.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AMONG the means so diversified in their application for acquiring the ready possessions of those who can afford, or are supposed to be capable of affording, to part with some of the circulating medium to the advantage of others, *minus* of the great means to "live and let live," none are more certain than the manœuvres over a billiard table. Among the fair appliances, if fair they can be called, by the professed handler of the cue, is the hiding and suiting his skill to the play of his inexperienced or unsuspecting opponent. It would not suit his purpose to beat him hollow, and thus frighten him from continuing to play. He wins, like a clever jockey, by half a head, a head, or a neck at most, and thus keeps the pot boiling in a gentle simmer. Another secure mode is for a couple of artists to take opposite sides in a double match, and to win or lose and to lose or win alternately or consecutively, first this way and then that, as it may best suit their united and several interests. But then it may be said that a gentleman, or flat, or pigeon, be he as skilful as the leg, sharper, or swindler, and both equally acquainted with the strength of the table, would, nevertheless, be fairly pitted in a single match, as each would entirely rest upon his dexterity. Seldom, indeed, will a sharp play unless he has a good strong pull in his favour; and when he appears to have the least, he may, and in all probability will, have a most definitive one. There is scarcely a public billiard room in London but possesses one or more hangers-on ready, and always watching, for an opportunity to make a match, or get up a game of pool. These men live, and live only by these means; and, in addition to the great advantages they must naturally have in constantly playing over the same table, *there is not a fair player on earth*, let him be never so excellent, but they can overreach and beat in the long run. There are plans for all kinds and every sort, and to enumerate them would consume a huge volume: but for a proof of our context.

Not one establishment, for aught we know, is worse than another : a selection, however, must be made for our purpose, and thus we wing our shaft to the head of the gigantic butt.

Mr Prate had fattened on billiards. For years he had been both an active and sleeping partner in a flourishing concern in the neighbourhood of Cork street. Wide awake where his interests were concerned, and, figuratively speaking, asleep as far as appearing as a participator and sharer of the profits. But the most vicious, as well as the most virtuous, will fall out when their welfare becomes the bone of contention. As the immortal bard says,—

“ Friends now fast sworn,
Whose double bosoms seem to wear one heart,
Whose hours, whose bed, whose meal, and exercise,
Are still together, who twin, as 'twere, in love
Unseparable, shall, within this hour,
On a dissension of a doit, break out
To bitterest enmity.”

What it was the world has never known ; but true it is, and we can venture to add that there is no pity whatever in the case, the long-established firm dissolved partnership. Mr Prate, the out-going partner, to set up a new concern, *solus cum dignitate*, and his less happy sharer of the spoils to wade through the intricacies of a certain court in the vicinity of Basinghall street.

From some under-current motives, of which we are in the dark, the celebrated hangers-on flew from the old house and joined the new ; and with a fine, fat, and plump pigeon in the trap, here we find them.

It was early, and what may be correctly called the cool of the evening, when the proprietor of the newly-sprung and fresh-rooted establishment was luxuriating upon a raised and stuffed seat in the shape of a sofa, cogitating upon his expectations. Reclining at his feet was the white-neckerchiefed individual addressed by the Queen of the Chase as “Ginger.” Both were puffing, in a gentle, dreamy mood, a couple of fragrant havannahs, and neither appeared disposed to break the reigning silence.

It was a nice time for contemplation. They had just dined upon the net returns of a good pool equally divided, and neither the proprietor nor the hanger-on were men to stint their appetites.

The former showed the full condition of strong digestive action, and plenty of material withal to engage the power—for he was a fat, chubby, and oily specimen of a high feeder; and although his companion was of Pharaoh's lean kine, still there was an appearance about him indicative of recent enjoyment in the animal propensity of eating well and largely.

The effects of luxurious feeding are so unmistakable. The skin assumes a soft, sleek hue, and the eyes, heavy from a quiescent disposition, blink, wink, and close and open, in a half wakeful, half asleep and dreamy, dozy state, between consciousness and a total want of knowledge of things without.

A deep shade was cast over the room by the gas being partly turned off, and the marker, taking advantage of the hour, had ensconced himself snugly in a corner, and was snoring most sonorously in slumber deep. He, poor wight, had refreshed himself recently upon an onion and a penny roll, flooded into his regions abdominal by half a pint of Barclay's worst.

"Confound that Gooseberry!" ejaculated Ginger, in a peevish, irritable tone, "how he blows."

"Like a porpoise," replied his master; "but the poor devil wants a few minutes' sleep. He was at it," continued he, "from noon yesterday to six this morning."

"A pretty good spell, certainly," rejoined Ginger.

"Tolerable work for the slavey," added Mr Prate commiseratingly.

"Not worse than picking oakum," argued his friend

"Certainly not," returned the proprietor, "and that Gooseberry's well seasoned to."

"You may well say that," said Ginger. "About two-thirds of his life, I imagine, have been devoted to that uninteresting avocation."

"It's a singular circumstance, and one not generally known," observed Mr Prate, between the intermitting puffs of his cigar, "that nearly every billiard-marker in London has been schooled on oakum picking."

"The greater number of them, of course, have been lagged," replied Ginger, "for all are such desperate rogues."

"Yes," rejoined his companion, "they are desperate rogues in a small way. I dare say now," continued he, pointing to the

unconscious object of his observation, "that that fellow sponges a matter of ten shillings a week out of the table by keeping back the money when I'm not here."

"No doubt about it," returned Ginger, "and for which he deserves scragging. Indeed, I think it was a case of rope a few years ago, for a servant to rob his master."

"And serve him right," added Mr Prate, sending a prodigious volume of smoke from his lips.

"These markers," remarked his friend, returning to the original subject, "are broken-knee'd clerks, chiefly, aint they?"

"Yes," replied Mr Prate; "chaps that have lost what they call their characters; but for my part, I never could think there could be any loss in anything so valueless."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Ginger; "that's good, that is."

"So many people," continued Mr Prate, "pretend to have been ruined in consequence of losing their characters, that I am precious glad that I never had one to lose."

"Except—"

"What?" inquired Mr Prate, as his friend raised himself on his elbow, and hesitated to conclude his sentence.

"A d—d bad one," replied Ginger, in a whisper.

"And I rejoice in the possession," rejoined his companion, "for, as far as my experience is concerned, its opposite neighbour never conferred a benefit upon anybody."

"What a moralist you are!"

"Moralists be figged!" exclaimed Mr Prate, petulantly. "I know what's what, as well as any moralist ever pupped. A good character," continued he, "is all my eye and Betty Martin. If a son of mine tried to get one, I'd cut him off with a button."

"There's no fear of any such attempt from a son of yours," replied Ginger.

"I hope not," rejoined his companion, "and I speak with the sentiments of a parent."

"Hark!" said Ginger, listening with pricked ears, "I think I hear some one coming."

"It isn't him yet," replied Mr Prate, "the hour is too early."

"If he keeps his word, he won't play a double match to-night," remarked his friend.

"He has had enough of that for some time to come," said the proprietor. "He should have been treated more tenderly."

"But he bled freely," replied Ginger, "and what would you have more?"

"Freely for the time," rejoined Mr Prate; "but it was too short for my views. Remember, Lord Sward is not a common pigeon."

"His feathers are worth the labour of pulling," returned Ginger.

"They are," added Mr Prate, "and they should be drawn so as to make the most of them; but both you and Slott have been too much in a hurry."

"You had the directing of us," said Ginger, by way of a plea in justification.

"That's true," replied the proprietor. "Still you were always ahead of my plans."

"What do you propose now, if he declines the double matches?"

"To humour him in single ones," replied Mr Prate.

"But he is nearly as good a player as you are," rejoined Ginger.

"If he was better," returned his companion, "it would make no difference."

"How so?"

"Gooseberry!" hallooed his master, "turn on the gas."

The startled Gooseberry sprung from his sleep and obeyed the order with alacrity.

"Now," said Mr Prate, throwing the balls over the table, "try and make a fine stroke with the spot ball. Recollect his lordship invariably chooses the spot ball."

The expert Ginger essayed to make a losing hazard with the ball selected by his friend; but it bounded short of the mark by some third of an inch.

"That's remarkably queer," observed he, looking very much astonished. "I would have bet twenty to one on the stroke."

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr Prate; "it only shows the triumph of mind over matter, as the people of the newspapers said when Bony Parte got licked."

Ginger now endeavoured to make a succession of strokes, but each one just failed of its object.

"Now reverse the balls," said the proprietor, "you'll not find the same difficulty with 'em."

Ginger complied with the order and effected straight and losing hazards, cannons, and all kinds of fancy strokes, without let, check, or stop.

"I can manage with the plain ball," remarked he; "but the spot seems bewitched."

"It is," shortly replied the proprietor.

"What! do you mean to say it's hoccussed?"

"Ay," said Mr Prate; "and made as safe to lose as any oss with a poisoned bean or a pail of water in his belly at the starting post."

"A light un, I suppose," returned his companion, examining the object of their discussion.

"Yes," added the proprietor; "he is what you may call *shaved*, and so nicely shaved, that no one with the quickest eye that ever peeped could discover it."

"Upon my honour—"

"Tush, tush," interrupted his friend. "Swear by something one may see or feel, not an airy nothing."

"Well!" continued Ginger, "you deserve to win. What a safe way of easing a fellow of his—"

"Tin," concluded Mr Prate, with a loud laugh. "Bless'd," continued he, "if I wasn't born for a poet, only a little spoiled in the bringing up."

"A very green pippin might play safely with such a tool as this against even Sward," said his friend; "for it must be admitted that he is a pretty handler of a cue."

"He is a pretty handler," replied Mr Prate, "and consequently we're obliged to take extra precautions."

"It's all right, then," rejoined Ginger, "if he will stick to his resolution of standing only on his own play."

"Quite," returned Mr Prate.

"But suppose he happens to take the plain ball instead of the spot?" observed Ginger.

"He can be accommodated to a nicety," replied the proprie-

tor, extracting from some pocket in his dress another ball bearing no mark of identity upon its surface.

"You're armed at all points, then," said Ginger.

"For a good, solid, successful plant," responded Mr Prate, in the tone and manner of one about to do a deed of merit.

"Listen!" exclaimed Ginger, "here he comes."

"Yes, that's his tread," replied Mr Prate, exultingly. "And now, my Lord Sward," continued he, "prepare for a liberal moulting."

CHAPTER XXV.

To hang over a fathomless descent by the eyelids is anything but an enviable state or condition. It is a struggle of weakness against strength, and the fall is but delayed like one bearing with the toot-hache until compelled to have it tugged from the jaw by reason of its torture. The intervening space is but the increased pain of anticipation, and might be avoided by the good old precept upon the policy of "taking the bull by the horns" in the first instance. Thus is it with ninety-and-nine debtors out of every hundred. They postpone and procrastinate the evil hour by every means that desperation can suggest, and what lively suggestions will that stern schoolmaster point out and render palatable to mental vision! Like one afraid to speak the truth concerning one delinquency, the debtor proceeds to roll his bale of troubles slowly up the steep hill, until the weight becomes too great a burthen for his strength, and back he falls at last to be crushed by the heap which, in the first instance, might have been leaped over, scarcely bruised and but slightly scathed.

These reflections are prodigiously likely to flit in the minds of gentlemen, whose assets fall in about the ratio of five hundred per cent. below their obligations, when in one of those nooks of retirement, y'eleft "a spunging house." They then begin to have a vivid idea of the utter uselessness of avoiding, at such an expenditure of care and caution, the many ordeals thrust upon their attention from dunning to bumming, and the steps are by no means sudden or abrupt. They go by gradation. First comes the civil application for some money to make up a small account :

then a rusty surprise at having been disregarded, or the promise broken or neglected. Then comes an angry remonstrance. Scarcely is time allowed for an egg to boil lightly before a damp and wafered letter, commencing, "Sir, I am instructed by —— to apply for ——, and unless——." To which follows a visit from a seedy, white-livered, lank-jawed, pimple-faced chip of mortality, with the expression of having been guilty of some offensive proceeding, and fearful of its being discovered by approaching within some six square yards. This individual generally selects the breakfast hour for his matin visit, and just as the newspaper is unfolded before the fire, as a preliminary to extracting its sweets in the easy chair, in all the *nonchalance* of dressing-gown and slippers, he is introduced to your notice by an unsuspecting flunky announcing that "a person from Mr Skinflint is a-waitin' to speak to you, Sir." But this hang-dog messenger of ill-tidings knows the value of time better than to pause in hall or passage. His footsteps, therefore, are close at the heels of John Thomas, and before the first three syllables are fairly from his lips, there is the thing itself peeping in ghastly relief over his shoulder.

The question is universally the same, and so is the form of sowing the pip and seed of a law suit.

"Mr Allbehind, I believe?" is the interrogation from the obsequious stranger.

"Yes, that is my name," replies the victim, feeling a warm glow suddenly spreading itself over his skin, and regarding the visitor with innate fear and trembling.

"Julius Allbehind!" returns the unwelcome individual, shuffling forwards with stealthy tread.

Allbehind feels that it is no use denying the name which his respected and respectable godfathers and godmothers gave him some five-and-twenty years since—associations of a silver papboat irresistibly springing at the same moment in his memory—and he therefore falters, "Ye—es."

Skinflint's Mercury is now sure, beyond a question, of hitting the right nail on the head, and, without further prelude, produces the narrow slip, commencing "Victoria by the grace of God—" and hastens from the presence of the said Julius Allbehind, either from a dictate of one of nature's first laws concerning self-pre-

servation, or that he may enjoy the perusing of the document in all the undisturbed leisure of solitude.

In a few days—to be particular, we believe the number to be eight—there is another step taken, in legal forms described a declaration, and a remarkably plain declaration it is, setting forth the ‘whereas’ and the ‘wherefore’ in good wholesome unmistakeable language. Then, at the expiration of the time specified by the law for ‘Allbehind’s’ raising the wind in any way coming within the mystic circle of his capacities for inflation, he begins to act upon the excellent principle, held inviolable, that an Englishman’s house is his castle.

“James.”

“Sir.”

“If anybody calls, I’m not at home.”

“Very good, sir.”

“And, and, and,” stammers Allbehind, averse to breaking the ice of his difficulties to James, especially as the flunky’s two last quarters’ wages are in arrear, “just take a glance up the area before opening the front door.”

“Yes, sir.”

Confound the rascal! He apes the innocence to such perfection that, unless the confidence be extended, he will first look up the area, and then throw the portal upon its hinges for the admission, perhaps, of one who, armed with the law’s dread power, will not take a denial.

“James.”

“Sir.”

“I depend upon your integrity and faithfulness to me.”

“You’re very good, sir.”

“I’m in temporary difficulties.”

“Sorry for it, sir.”

“You must not permit anybody to enter this house without you are well acquainted with them, or I chance to be out of it.”

“I’ll take care of that, sir.”

And James does take, and his master, Allbehind, takes care; but with all the peeping, peering, watching, glancing, and vigilance, applied by each and both, in some unlucky hour or moment of relaxation, Grab pounces upon Allbehind in his

unsuspecting moment, and bears him in triumph to his den. This is no rare and uncommon portrait; but as common as sparrows upon our housetops.

And this had been precisely the case with the Marquis D'Horsay. He had been pinked the night previous in forgetfulness of the hour when he should have retired to his refuge and security. Mr Sloughman's keen eye was always upon him from the moment he issued upon his Sunday trip in quest of healthful respiration, and at length, the constancy of his duty availed his purpose. The last stroke of the midnight hour fell when the Marquis was little less than a mile from home, and, unconscious of this untoward circumstance, he used no extraordinary means to make good the error, and fell a victim, like many a wiser man, to the disregard of creeping time.

"Marquis, I arrest you," cried the triumphant Bum, as his debtor and now prisoner essayed to gain the knocker of the outer gate.

"It is not twelve," replied our hero, within a few words of being speechless with horror.

"What's the time?" hallooed Mr Sloughman to a policeman passing on the opposite side of the way.

"Ten minutes past twelve," replied he, hoarsely, as if there was a conglomeration of fog and night air lodging in his throat.

"Then I'm lost!" exclaimed the Marquis."

"No, you're not," replied the Bum. "Come quietly with me, and matters may be better than you think for."

And there, at last, stood the leader of fashion and focus for all eyes of the West to centre in, squeezing, or endeavouring to squeeze, his handsome nose between the close bars of Mr Sloughman's best room for the best kind of visitors. He was deeply engaged in a reverie of anything but a pleasant nature, and was not displeased at its being broken by the entrance of Mr Sloughman.

"Good morning, marquis," said the Bum, throwing himself upon a sofa in a negligent manner.

"Good morning," responded his prisoner, gloomily.

"I've come to offer ye my advice of the way of getting out of this, I dare say to you, unpleasant place."

"You're very kind," returned the Marquis bitterly.

"Don't put it down to my kindness to *you*," added Mr Sloughman, "but to the kindness I always feel for myself. Now, you've been a great trouble to me," continued he, "and I want to turn you into a little profit."

"I've no doubt of that," replied the Marquis; "but how do you propose managing it?"

"Getting you to pay me the amount of your hatful of unpaid bills, and giving me a bonus to tell ye how," responded the Bum.

"Egad!" exclaimed the Marquis, "I should rejoice in the opportunity."

"Well, then," returned Mr Sloughman, "pay the detainers, be off, and take more care for the future."

"But I thought you were to tell me how?"

"Send to a friend in possession of the ready, and I'll be your messenger," said Mr Sloughman.

"Humph!" ejaculated the Marquis thoughtfully, "I owe a *hundred and twenty thousand*."

"But there's not six against ye," replied the Bum, producing a list of those who had had the opportunity and taken the precaution of registering their demands in the books of the Sheriff. "When it becomes known, however, that you are here," continued he, "God knows where we shall stow the copies of the writs. *This* house won't hold 'em."

"By my honour, the advice is good," rejoined our hero, regaining some ten degrees in the thermometer of his spirits.

"I know it's good," returned Mr Sloughman; "and therefore don't dilly dally, but act upon it at once."

"Brembroke would lend me the sum, I believe," said the Marquis.

"Then act up to your belief," replied the Bum; "I always do, although an Israelite."

"Give me pen, ink, and paper," said our hero, cheerfully.

"You shall have 'em in a crack," returned the ready Mr Sloughman, hastening from the room and returning in less time than his shadow took to become indistinct upon the wall of the apartment.

"Use strong language," said Mr Sloughman, placing the writing implements before our hero. "There's nothing like stiff

words when you're going to borrow money. I always say so to young greenhorns that write penitent letters to their governors after I've laid a little salt on their tails."

In a short time a note was sealed, and Mr Sloughman undertook the responsible office of a faithful messenger—faithful from his interest.

"I'll not be long," said he; "I've a fast prad at the door, that can trot a match against time from one mile to twenty."

"Then away," replied our hero; "for I shall feel suspended on hooks until your return."

It might be an hour; but it seemed a long, weary one to our hero, before the Bum returned wagging with delight.

"I'd bet a hundred to one it's all right," said he, placing in the hands of the Marquis a sealed letter; "although I didn't see his lordship. The note feels too fat for a blank."

"It is a blank, though," replied the Marquis.

"A blank!" exclaimed the Bum, disconsolately.

"Yes," returned our hero, smiling blandly; "a blank cheque."

"Hurrah!" hallooed Mr Sloughman; "I thought I was right."

"I suppose he was in bed?" observed the Marquis.

"Yes," replied the Bum; "and I had a great mind to wait until he had risen, for it's a dangerous time to ask for a loan when the peepers are just opened; but I thought, as time was so valuable to us, it better to run the risk of ruffling his temper."

"Now begone," responded the Marquis, filling up the document for the amount wanted; "get the money and my discharge as quickly as possible."

"All shall be cleared within a couple of hours," said the delighted Mr Sloughman; "and when I catch you forgetting the time again, I suppose I may—"

"What?"

"Shave a weasel when I catch it asleep," was Mr Sloughman's humorous conclusion.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN the widest, well-paved, rose-flanked path of life, devoid of weeds, rolling stones, and other impediments to the ease of the wayfarer, there still always will be found something to trip him from his propriety. No matter whether he be one who treads o'er the crowns of his fellows, or jostles their elbows, or cringes to their shoe-latches, he must find the stumbling-block in his course and the check-string to his speed. For the most part, however, this discovery is by no means a semblance to the exertions of the philosophers in search of perpetual motion, the handicraft of the alchemist, or the mode of navigating that transparent medium, the air. No; these theories have for ages proved too much for the practical deduction of the most subtle brains; but the general—we may add—the great quicksand of mortal failures, consists in the frequent want of the knowledge and means of “raising the wind.” This, we assert, without fear of contradiction, is the grand error of human existence, and were it possible to teach the ready mode, by some electrical ready reckoner, to supply the deficiency and vacuum in space, nine-tenths of mortal heartaches would cease to render this speck beneath the moon a valley of thorns and of thistles, and scentless flowers nipped in chilly north-east gales. But it is not to be so. An edict, by Fate directing the whirl of this “earthly earth,” denies irremediably this division of useful knowledge to the upper regions of the regions of pigmy atoms of active dust and moulded clay, and thus one and all must bend to the decree awarding their transitory miseries in the denial of the appliances to “raise the wind.” We venture an opinion that, from the Earl taking precedence of his brothers of the blood as pure as that of the Ptolemies, to the humble and itinerant vender of fruits and vegetables, the preponderating millstone of their respective difficulties consists in the before-mentioned want of the way in “raising the wind.” So it was in the time of Cæsar: so it is in these

degenerate days, when the waifs and strays of royal patronage and favour, rewards and honours, are caught and capped by pitiable abortions, and wild, uncouth savages, but one remove from the animals in whose skins, claws, and tusks, they are robed and tricked.

As we have before said in a late page—can such things be and the pale lamp of night still offer her bright influence when the sun ceases to inculcate the germs of quick existence? Shall it be?—yes, and it *must* be said that the great and the good were suffered to pine in want and in abject wretchedness for the wind to inflate their sails of hope never being raised for them; while the utmost stretch of the puffed and extravagant expectations of the schemes in these unnatural and natural monstrosities meet with the realization of all their fertile imaginations can conjure. The poet, the painter—not the flattering limner of a portrait—the dramatist, and the actor are left to freeze and cool in the shade of their attics, while the foreign adventurer in horrors is loaded with favours, and his capacious maw all but choked with repletion. But pass we on. It is but a penny whistle to the thunder.

Money is to life what steam is to the engine, gas to the balloon, and hypocrisy to society — an indispensable accompaniment. Without it, and 'tis a body devoid of blood or pulse; a mere anatomy, an existence. So all men discover, sooner or later, and it would be well for numbers if the disclosure was made in an early stage instead of a concluding one. This, however, is an occurrence rarer than a bird of paradise. The intelligence from the palm of stern truth is a late pippin, and comes when the frost has forbidden the fruit to be enjoyed with advantage.

In his study the Marquis d'Horsay was, with sunken chin upon his bosom, enduring the ordeal of a brown study. It was not of the past that his thoughts were reverting, but to the future; and although clouds and darkness, mists and fogs, rested upon it, yet he in no way flinched from regarding the horizon with a steady gaze.

"The follies of my life," said he, "have been as innumerable as the falsehoods related of them, and yet may they not be turned to advantage? I'll write my Life and Times for the benefit of my creditors and future generations, and thus place them to a good account at last. Egad!" continued he, warming upon his subject,

“but the thought savours of profit in the most substantial form,” and the Marquis chafed his fingers with an unmistakable movement.

Just now his reverie was broken by a slight tap upon his shoulder, and, upon turning suddenly round to learn the cause of his disturbance, he beheld the calm and beautiful features of the Countess of Rivington.

“Thinking, and that, too, aloud?” she said, with a smile.

“Ay,” he replied, “and if you’ve learned the import of my thoughts, what think you of them?”

The Countess slightly shook her head.

“Your reasons for damping my enterprise?” continued the Marquis.

“Men cannot speak of themselves without their words bruising the tongue that utters them,” replied his fair companion.

“Is such a maxim to be found in your desultory thoughts?” asked the Marquis, laughing.

“If not recorded in that volume,” rejoined the Countess, “many, I fear, may be found of less sageness and importance.”

“Well, well,” returned our hero, “I’m no jaundiced critic. And so,” continued he, “you object to my turning a rival scribe.”

“Upon such a subject,” returned the lady. “A man’s follies should be a closed volume, not one for circulating libraries or the shelves of a speculating publisher.”

“There’s a sound of good sense in your words,” rejoined the Marquis; “but,” continued he, “something must be done to ‘raise the wind.’”

“I have thought of a plan for turning your genius and talents to advantage,” replied his companion, “and have sought you for the purpose of communicating my design.”

“You’ll readily believe that you have found a willing listener,” added our hero.

“And one as willing to reduce the intelligence to active measures, I trust,” returned the Countess.

“Neither shall your trust be doomed to disappointment,” said the Marquis. “Speak, I conjure you.”

“In the laborious endeavour to while away your hours of leisure, you have frequently tried the efficacy of your pencil,” replied the

Countess, "and that, too, with eminent success. May you not——"

"Turn portrait painter!" interrupted the Marquis, with flushed cheek and flashing eyes.

"Yes," replied his companion, "you have the gift of transferring good resemblances of the human face divine to canvas, and to apply it profitably now would be——"

"My excellent counsellor," again interrupted our hero, catching a hand of his fair companion and imprinting a kiss upon it, "would that I could retrace the past for some quarter of a century, and then place myself under your guidance;—what shoals, rocks, quicksands, and whirlpools I should have avoided!"

"'Tis never too late to steer the proper course while your bark is under weigh," replied the Countess. "Remember, 'heaven helps those who help themselves.'"

"And the assistance comes to me in a heavenly shape," rejoined our hero gallantly.

"Then you intend availing yourself of my suggestion," observed his adviser.

"Most indubitably," responded the Marquis. "I'll grasp my pencil with the spirit of a knight errant of yore did his lance, and retrieve my broken fortune——"

"*Broken!*" exclaimed the Countess.

"Well, then! cracked and gone," responded our hero, "to be more concise as to the facts."

"In what securities was it vested?" inquired the Countess with a sly look.

"To confess the truth," replied he, "which is not always of the order agreeable, I'm compelled to say that the securities were always of a purely personal nature."

"And therefore always liable to serious fluctuations," added the Countess.

"More so than I, in my youthful and sanguine hopes, ever imagined," returned our hero. "But time," he continued, drawing his delicately white hand across his forehead, "has dispelled all such glowing and dazzling creations of the mind."

"When will you commence your pursuit?" inquired his companion.

"There's nothing like the present," returned the Marquis with enthusiasm. "Give me a sitting, and I'll produce a portrait worthy of a place—and a good one, too, or the hanging committee will prove themselves anything but a committee of taste—in the exhibition of the Royal Academy."

"A good thought!" ejaculated the Countess. "The means will speedily announce to the public your new and praiseworthy pursuit, and I am certain numbers will apply for the engagement of your easel."

"May the prognostication prove correct," returned the Marquis, "and until shown to the contrary, we will revel in the belief that it is so."

"In an hour I will give you a sitting," observed the Countess, about quitting the apartment.

"Stay," replied our hero: "a cloudy thought comes o'er the prospects of my dream. Supposing some of my persecutors avail themselves of this open path to my presence?"

"That can be avoided by all applicants being required to send their commissions in a written form in the first instance," replied the Countess, "and then by a searching inquiry concerning their genuineness previous to giving them admission."

"A careful conception," rejoined the Marquis, "and so let it be. In an hour, then, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you arrayed in accordance with your exquisite judgment, as the crowning subject for my pencil."

Soon after the departure of the Countess, and while the Marquis was preparing his implements of painting, a shadow was thrown suddenly across the soft, pliant carpet at his feet, and the well-known voice of that mysterious being the Emperor greeted him with a salutation.

"Ah, Asmodeus!" exclaimed our hero, perceiving his unannounced visitor. "Thou ghostly apparition in substantial form, relate thy errand, and that, too, quickly, for I'm in a hurry befitting the task of Puck."

"I've come to relate the news of last night's creation," replied the Emperor.

"What of them?" inquired the Marquis.

"Bosky Tom's shop was broken into by the unboiled, with some dozen others," rejoined the Emperor, "and what with the hellites,

playmen, banks, dice, cards, and traps of all kinds, a goodly array was made at the beak's office this morning."

"Then his star of luck is on the wane," returned the Marquis. "What became of the first favourite of fortune and his crew of unfortunates?"

"The banks and the traps seized were confiscated to the benefit of her Majesty's revenue," added the Emperor, "and each of the prisoners, to the number of about seventy, were fined from forty shillings to fifty pounds."

"And all paid as a matter of course."

"Yes," continued the Emperor, "the fund of the association was drawn upon pretty heavily; but that appears not to be the worst part of it."

"How so?" asked the Marquis.

"These interruptions are to be repeated," replied his visitor, "if necessary, until every hole and corner are closed against play. Even on the race courses, at the fairs, and such like meetings, not even a raffle for a penny pie, or a game of knock-'em-downs, is to be allowed."

"Then all is up with the play world," rejoined the Marquis, "and Crockford's may now become a refuge for the destitute."

"Bosky Tom, however, seemed to have an inkling of what was coming," said the Emperor, "for he took in a new partner some few days ago, and I'll be answerable that he was taken in for weighty reasons, in more senses than one."

"That fellow contrives to make even misfortune weigh in the balance of his gains," replied the Marquis; "but who stood prominently forth among that motley company?"

"That ignoble lord who tried to twist the virtue of his wife into vice, for the sake of profit, was among the lagged," responded the Emperor, "and it was some hours before he could raise the amount of the fine imposed upon him."

"If his end should be to lie in a damp ditch and to rot," rejoined the Marquis passionately, "it will be no more than his deserts. I have no right," continued he, "God knows! to pick holes in the coats of others; but there's a law of decency, even in a vice, which, when disregarded, becomes offensive to the most callous."

"Right, quite right," added the Emperor, "and he has set

aside the code with a more regardless hand, perhaps, than any living man."

"His own stamp be his brand," said our hero. "The wreath will last to warn those from his presence who would shun the pestilence of a diseased mind, and a heart scarcely less tainted than carrion."

"There was Huntingcastle also in the scrape," said his visitor, "and he paid the fine of three pounds by giving a bill for five hundred to Hayes."

"The victim continues, then, to bleed freely," returned the Marquis.

"It's a question now who may be deemed the victim," replied the Emperor; "for yesterday's 'Gazette' contained a second announcement of his lordship's intention of availing himself of its ways and means to expunge from his memory the existence of debts and liabilities."

"What, again?" ejaculated the Marquis.

"Yes," replied his visitor, "and for the cream of a hundred thousand pounds."

"And what may have been the amount of consideration this time?"

"Not as many shillings," replied the Emperor, "and yet the white-livered fool will have to suffer as if he had enjoyed every sixpence of the whole amount."

"Suffer and make suffer seems to be his motto," rejoined the Marquis, "and thus the account may be equitably balanced in the end."

"The scratchers will find themselves scored, I think," returned the Emperor. "However, be that as it may, it matters not whether the fool or rogue wins."

"To turn from a subject of less personal interest to one of greater," observed the Marquis—"have you aught of worth to communicate relative to myself or my affairs?"

"It must depend upon your own ideas of the value of my faithful services," replied his visitor.

"How so?"

"Because you're now on the eve of losing them," said the Emperor. "And I have ever remarked that men value that most which they have either lost or are about to lose."

"What, desert your post and abandon your office?" inquired the Marquis with unfeigned surprise.

"Yes," responded his inexplicable visitor, "I shall go as I have come, not knowing how, not caring where; but it will be never to return."

"Your reason?"

"I never give any, like the wisest of philosophers when puzzled for the cause to the effect," replied the Emperor.

"But——"

The Marquis cut short the sentence. It was useless. The Emperor had gone.

CHAPTER XXVII.

GLOOM, dark as the darkest night, sat upon the brow of Mr Samuel Shallow as he reclined in his chair, brooding upon the sorrows arrived, and those in the prospective, gradually rendering the distance less between him and them.

"Yes," said he, clasping his hands faintly in despair, "the game is up for lawyers, bill discounters, sheriffs' officers, and gaming-house keepers. Their occupations are gone, or are going, and with them, consequently, the profits. What will become of us—heaven only knows! Government will not grant us either compensation or pensions, and thus we shall be left to the unmerciful consideration of the world at large, without a grain of sympathy for our sorrows. It is true," continued the unhappy sporting lawyer, "that I have lined my nest to the best of my ability; but then," and he shook his head despondingly, "the lining is of such a doubtful and dangerous character. Bills, post obits, reversions—which may never fall in during my life—and a large investment in horse-flesh. By my transgressions, which I admit and acknowledge to be ever before me, I begin to dread the result, or what may be technically termed the settling day."

At this moment a pouliticed-faced clerk announced that that indefatigable bum, Mr Sloughman, requested an audience.

"Let him come in," said Mr Shallow, and quickly following upon the heels of the permission the representative of that to-be-dreaded functionary, the Sheriff, made his appearance.

"Good morning, sir," said he in doleful cadence, "I suppose you've seen the precious slice of luck we're going to have?"

"There are so many of the kind in store for us," replied the attorney, "that you must be more particular for my comprehension."

"I mean the bill to do away with the imprisonment of the swells for debt," rejoined Mr Sloughman, with a heartfelt bubbling of his pent-up sorrows.

"Oh yes!" returned the lawyer, affecting a joy poorly according with his feelings, "oh yes!" repeated he, rubbing the palms of his hands, "I'm aware of that blessing in pickle."

"It's a real clincher," added Mr Sloughman, between his teeth. "An out-an'-out home thrust at our witals and wittles. What, I should like to know," continued he, "does Lord Campbell go for to suppose is to become of our wives and babbies? Bless'd if I don't think they'll all come to feel as hungry as the stomach did that charged its owner with having cut his throat!"

"What stomach was that?" inquired the attorney.

"I don't know the particular one, sir," returned Mr Sloughman; "but I heard there *was* an occasion of the kind where a stomach suspected the wittles escaped out of the throat before it reached it on account of a lengthy separation between the bread and the bread basket."

"A somewhat extraordinary suspicion," added the lawyer, smiling.

"But a very natural one," said Mr Sloughman. "When nature calls," continued he, placing his hand significantly upon the regions of his basement, "it's no use to try to quiet her by saying you're a-coming. No, no, no. You must down with the dust and trot out your donkey."

"Have you anything particular to say to me?" asked the attorney.

"Yes, sir," replied Mr Sloughman, in a serious tone and manner, "my particular object in calling was to make known to you a u-nanimous request on the part and behalf of the respected and respectable sheriffs' officers, their unhappy families, runners, assistants, and deputy-assistants, and all parties concerned in the present system of caging folks unable to pay their debts, and properly forcing them to remain so by way of punishment to the fools

what trusted 'em, for you, as the great patron—that's the word Levy used in his speech," continued the orator by way of parenthesis—"as the great patron of bumming gents., to take the chair this evening at a meeting to be held in my lock-up—the best room is unoccupied—to take into consideration the measures for turning aside this bill which must devour us."

"If it would be of any avail," rejoined Mr Shallow, "I should with pleasure consent to the wishes of so worthy a requisition; but the knell has been rung and our doom is sealed."

"Oh don't!" whined his companion, "don't go for to make a sudden certainty of it. Let us down by degrees, and as gently as you can, sir."

"The sooner the worst is known and arrived at the better," returned the lawyer, "and to slide into ruin is as bad as jumping into it. I tell you briefly, but conclusively, that we are baked and boiled without hope of redemption."

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Mr Sloughman, all but moved to shed one briny drop to the fallen fortunes of the bums, "what pump are we to draw comfort from now, I should like to know?"

"Upon my life the question's a difficult one," replied the attorney; "but you can try what aperient medicine will do, followed by strict religious discipline in keeping your minds towards heaven."

"That remedy might do well enough for old tea-drinking women," rejoined his dispirited visitor; "but we've been accustomed to stronger liquors, Mr Shallow, and that must be taken into consideration if we don't follow the prescription."

"Take any course that may best accord with your inclinations," added the attorney; "but you may rest assured that the one I have suggested will produce as much, if not more, consolation than any other to your afflicted minds."

"It sounds but weak stuff, sir, very weak," said Mr Sloughman, bearing about as cheerful an appearance as a man about to produce the effects of a strong emetic.

"It may not prove stimulating to the spirits," responded the attorney. "However, you may take my word for the truth of what I have said."

"Baked and boiled!" ejaculated Mr Sloughman passionately. "Things is come to a pretty pass!"

"You, at least, will not feel the screw," observed the lawyer.

"Why so, sir?" inquired the doleful functionary.

"Because of your well-filled exchequer."

"Ah, sir!" sighed the bum, "it's an old proverb, which says, 'light come, light go.' A great deal of money's passed through my hands," continued he; "as much, perhaps, as would pay a tolerably stiff dividend on the united debts of my customers; but ——" and Mr Sloughman concluded the sentence by the telegraphic signal of placing a thumb over his left shoulder.

"Gone, eh?" returned the lawyer.

"The end of the skirt's been round the corner some time," replied Mr Sloughman. "For what with Mrs S.'s velvets, silks, and satins; the carriage—a vauoss, it's true—Opera box, a couple of saddle nags for me, and pocket money for my lighter pleasures, together with a strong falling-off in business these last few years, I'm about as light of money as when I commenced the purfession."

"I feel for your situation," observed the attorney; "but, at the same time, can devise no method of improving it."

"You quite kick at the petition, then, or anything of that sort?" said Mr Sloughman.

"We might as well whistle to the wind," replied the legal adviser.

"Then my mind's made up," rejoined the fallen bum. "I'll retire, with my innocent kids and Mrs S., to the privacy of a three-pair-back, and endeavour to bear our hard lot with——" Mr Sloughman was about to commit the error of adding "Christian resignation," but, remembering in the nick of time his want of faith in the creed, he checked himself and added—"the best appetite we can on crusts and onions."

"A seasonable resolution," returned the lawyer, "and that your hunger may never outstrip the means of supply, is the sincere wish of one of the strongest admirers of your honourable calling."

"The same to you, sir," rejoined the deeply affected bum, "and —and——" but he could say no more. The words rose to his lips like bubbles to the surface of the stream, and died away in like silence.

"Good-bye," said Mr Shallow, waving his hand as the crest-fallen bum bowed his exit. "And here's a further proof, if one were wanting," soliloquized Mr Shallow upon the departure of the

legal engine for squeezing the remnants of distress from the ruined, "and here's a further proof," repeated he, "of the coming night. Rats quit the tottering house ; so will I."

"Ha!" exclaimed a voice, causing the reflecting attorney to start and look suddenly towards the quarter from whence it came, and, as he did so, he perceived the countenance of the notorious, if not famous Colonel Hopeland between the partly opened door and the post. "Ha!" repeated the Colonel, "may I come in?"

"And be d——d if you like," replied Mr Shallow in a truly surly tone.

"Fie, fie!" rejoined the applicant, placing a fore-finger upon his lip, and gravely shaking his head. "Never swear when enjoying the piscatory art of hooking tittlebats, Shallow."

"Shut that door," rejoined the lawyer, "either upon your heels or your toes, for the draught is unpleasant to me."

"As I *have* the selection," replied the Colonel, stepping forwards and obeying the order with alacrity, "you'll appreciate, I am sure, the taste of a man of refinement in selecting the latter."

'We change and others change, while recollection would feign renew what it can but recal.' So the poet has written, and never, perchance, were his words more signally verified than in the person and exterior of the gallant soldier of fortune. Once the neatest of the neat—a very Brummel of the age; he now gave evidence of the mildew of his credit, and the lack of the ready wherewithal to command the exigencies of the wear and the tear and the friction of time. A smoked and dingy gossamer was clasped in a hand barely covered with a kid glove, once bleached as a snowdrift, but now leading the spectator to imagine that it might have protected the digits of a chimney sweeper in a recent trial of his skill. A coat thrice revived with that deceptive fluid which gives a gloss at the expense of the substance, was buttoned close to his chin, in order to curtain that familiar article of dress known under the title of a shirt. It was, indeed, of a hue to be concealed, so yellow and jaundiced did the antiquated garment look, that for aught an observer could tell it might have been the cere-cloth of a mummy exhumed after the burial of a thousand years. Tight rusty black trowsers were strapped down to a pair of shoes (but not fellows) long passed mending, and altogether the

Colonel's appearance bore a decided resemblance to that of a gentleman especially flat upon his luck.

"And to what fortuitous cause may I ascribe the honour of this visit?" inquired the lawyer, with well-feigned assumption of politeness both of tone and manner.

"Come, come," replied the Colonel, shuffling forwards; "no chaff, Shallow, no chaff. Remember my very seedy condition, and let your bowels of compassion be touched for the sorrows of one quite bereft of tick or the ready rhino."

"You deserve neither one nor the other," rejoined the attorney, "and never did."

"Your nature really hardens at the appearance of grief," returned the Colonel, in an expostulatory voice. "This condition of mind quite shocks me."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr Shallow. "Your impudence and coolness quite beats *me*."

"If my good sense did not lead me to suppose that you were flattering my poor abilities," added the Colonel, placing his right hand on the left of his breast, "I should consider myself the proudest of men."

"Well, well!" ejaculated the attorney in an impatient manner. "What is your errand, for my time's valuable?"

"We should be brief, then, to stand a remote chance of success with impatience," replied the Colonel, and taking a thick roll of paper from his dilapidated waistcoat pocket, he continued in a soft, flute-like, insinuating tone—"Here are some kites——"

"Then put them in the fire," interrupted Mr Shallow, pointing to the grate.

"You're not serious?" returned the Colonel.

"Never more so in my life," responded the lawyer.

"You've not heard whose autographs they are," said the applicant, beseechingly.

"Nor do I want. Sufficient for me to know that they are worthless by finding them in your hands," replied Mr Shallow.

"Appearances are certainly against their intrinsic value," rejoined the imperturbable Colonel; "but reflection will show that they are at least worth their stamps, and that's saying a great deal for acceptances in these days."

"Whose are they?"

"Huntingcastle's."

"Do you offer them by weight or by measure?"

"Either way," said the accommodating negotiator, tossing the roll of signed stamps into the air, and catching them adroitly, "so long as you'll bid."

"I would as soon bid for a suit in the Insolvent Debtors' Court with nix for assets," rejoined Mr Shallow.

"Think again," added the Colonel, resuming his game of pitch and toss, "and recollect you're a lawyer. Don't, pray don't allow me to correct a professional opinion upon the merits of the case."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr Shallow.

"Huntingcastle's not a coach proprietor or posting-master now," replied the Colonel, for a third time resuming his sport with the roll of bills, "he's not in trade, recollect—eh?"

"Humph!" ejaculated the attorney, reflectively.

"Ha!" returned his visitor. "You see, I observe, the point, or begin to see it."

"He must take the benefit of the act if he doesn't bolt."

"And then outlawry is the trick upon the cards."

"I'll have a cut in if it's only for revenge," rejoined the lawyer, "at a very low figure."

"Name your price."

"A shilling in the pound."

"Oh, Shallow!" exclaimed the colonel, bending upon him an admonitory look, "you're becoming really quite irreligious."

"And I won't give that," continued the attorney, "unless you'll get him to renew every farthing of the old debt without the premium of a sixpence."

"Have I ears?" said the Colonel.

"Yes," replied Mr Shallow, with a sarcastic sneer, "I should say, from your past life, that you've little reason to envy the ass his redundancy of ear."

"Pithy, and to the purpose," rejoined the Colonel. "But let us be reasonable," continued he, tossing the securities into Mr Shallow's lap. "There's a lump of nice, fresh, clean, crisp, and pleasant-looking bills for ten thousand, although the name of the acceptor may not be particularly well written or always spelt cor-

rectly—what do you say—all being at the shortest dates you like to fill them up in—to the low charge of half-a-crown in the pound?”

“No.”

“Two shillings?”

“No.”

“One and six?”

“No.”

“Positively?”

“*Most* decidedly.”

“Then take the lot at your own figure,” added the Colonel; “for I’m particularly inclined for a good dinner to-day.”

“Is it a rarity?” inquired the attorney, fixing his twinkling eyes upon the cadaverous features of the Colonel.

“So much so that I expect my palate will be quite agreeably astonished,” frankly replied his visitor.

“I must have a renewal of the old claim as a preliminary,” rejoined Mr Shallow.

“Say that you’ll give a little cheque for fifty and I’ll produce it in half an hour,” returned the gallant Colonel.

“I will then,” added the lawyer, “although I fear the bargain to be a dear one.”

“It’s the best investment of capital you ever made,” said the Colonel, “and in the end must return—it makes me sigh to think of those returns when they come to hand.”

“From envy?”

“As unadulterated as was ever raised from the depths of a bosom,” rejoined the Colonel.

“Our agreement’s arranged, then?”

“And within an hour of being settled,” replied the Colonel, taking his departure.

“There may yet be picking for me,” said Mr Shallow to himself, “although to an inexperienced eye there would seem to be nothing but bare bones.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"THE follies of the day" are here about to be drawn to a close. The scenes were designed at the onset to be extended to a greater length ; but who can direct his fate ? The thread is snapped, and the scattered fragments of the woof will alone remain. Should they, however, succeed in teaching one benighted traveller in this dreary world, choked with brambles and pitfalls in every path, a single lesson, or cause him to turn from the brink over which so many of "the good and the true" have fallen, then the reward for the toil shall be deemed ample, and the reaping all-sufficient.

Whatever may have been thought, whatever may have been said, regarding the motives for stringing these desultory scenes of life into the form we have presented them to our readers, none other existed than the desire to hold a mirror up for the reflection of men and things as they *are* ; not what they would *seem* to be. If in this undertaking an actor may have recognized his own features, and beheld their distortion with surprise, let him remember the defect lies in the object giving its semblance, and from no fault in the speculum. It has been said "where experience fails to inculcate the truth, homilies direct from heaven would fail." This we have cogent reasons for believing to be the truth, and therefore shall abandon the teaching to that stern preceptor who has now concluded her task of pointing out "the follies of the day."

Lest, however, disappointment might be felt in thus abruptly leaving our puppets on the stage, we will make a brief summary of their "whereabouts," and then dismiss them at once and for ever.

Our hero, the Marquis, "sticks to leather" with a fixed, steady, and a profitable purpose. The end he has in view is to make hay while the sun shines, and although it may, nay *must* be a work of time to obtain a sufficient stack to satisfy the innumerable rapa-



cious mouths gaping for the proceeds of his labours, yet the patience and perseverance he exhibits will doubtlessly pull him through in the end.

Lord Huntingcastle is on the eve of again exhibiting himself in an extremely unfavourable light for the heir presumptive to an earldom, by humbly petitioning for a speedy release of pressing difficulties amounting to the trifling matter of eighty thousand pounds. It may be a subject of interest to learn that this nobleman has determined to make himself the most contemptible of his order, and to prove the error of a popular belief in the excellence of high breeding. His decision is to show that a lord may be the lowest bred scamp on the surface of the earth, and a fit associate only for the company to be met with in low gin shops and similar places of resort for the ignorant and the vicious. He was so disgusted with the lenient opinions entertained of his former excesses, and the mild punishment he received for his reckless extravagance, that he is now going to give a conclusive proof of the fallacy of mortal judgments and the occasional waste of mercy in being merciful.

Bosky Tom still flourishes. With a talent belonging only to the prudent, he was always, as he graphically termed his caution, "wide awake." The storm did not burst upon his craft with her sails set: all were reefed, snug, and comfortable. Having early information of the decision of Sir James Graham to suppress every kind of gaming, he offered his thriving establishment for a large sum to an innocent victim. He bought, and was sold a very respectable bargain. The next day the house was entered by the officers, and, if not closed, is on the eve of becoming so. Bosky Tom is now a retired gentleman, and offers a happy example of the great difference between pigeons and pluckers.

Mr Shallow still keeps up appearances, and although he once pencilled his name, address, and occupation in a newspaper, under the head of GAZETTE, just to see how it would read,—it was on one inauspicious morning, after a long duration of cut-throat weather, and when the blue devils were strong within him. We have reason to believe Mr Shallow is too deep for the 'Gazette.'

Madge Redmonds is sadly reduced. She is now engaged in the cares of business, and may be seen sitting under an umbrella at the corner of Drury lane, vending oranges in winter, and vary-

ing her stock in trade in accordance with the seasons. We patronized her but a short time since to the amount of a pennyworth of baked chestnuts.

A man in a hurry, his costume far worse than seedy, may frequently be observed in the neighbourhood of Fleet street. He is tall and lank, and is invariably bustling through the crowd with a bundle of newspapers under his arm. Reader, do not doubt the startling assertion, this is a flying newsman in the person of Colonel Hopeland. To such base callings may we come at last. Knowing Harry is still grinding his life out on the mill, and from the information we have received relative to his pursuits when freed from this round of labour, we have reason to conjecture that he will generally be found at home—a penitent in a penitentiary.

Of the Emperor nothing is known. He was a mystery when first introduced, and, now that we dismiss him, he must still remain so. He came from whence no man can say; he went to where no man can tell.

And now our sand is spent—our course is run.

THE END.



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